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The University of Alberta

PAUL LAFARGUE: HIS ROLE AS A THEORETICIAN

By

KAREN PATRICIA BARDY

A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring, 1988

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submitted by Karen Patricia Bardy in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History.

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Abstract

Lafargue's contribution in presenting, interpreting, and relating Marxist theory to French conditions has been recognized. However, little analysis has been completed in order to assess the development of his own ideas based on a Marxist framework. This thesis will assess Lafargue's contribution as a theoretician in two specific areas: his writings on the quality of working conditions for the working classe and the role of women. Each of these themes reflects Lafargue's ability to relate to the concerns of the working classes and to develop and advocate his own ideas based on a Marxist framework.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to acknowledge the debt I owe Professor Liebel-Weckowicz. Her guidance has made this work possible. I would also like to thank my husband, Ken, for his constant encouragement, my father, Joseph, and my brothers Jim, Ken, and Warren for their support. I wish to dedicate whatever merit this thesis has to my parents, Joe and Sandra, and to little George.

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INTRODUCTION

Late nineteenth century France represented a period of diverse socialist thought. This was reflected in the variety and number of socialist parties, all of which strove to provide France with the "correct" socialist theory. One of the most significant parties at this time was the Guesdists. In France, they were the first interpreters and promoters of Marx's and Engel's theories. In this role, they established the foundation for the future development of Marxist thought in France. A co-founder and influential member of the Guesdists was Paul Lafargue. He was both an active politician and one of the party's main political writers. In this way, he combined both theory and practice in Marxism and acted as a key figure in the dissemination of Marxism in France. As a Marxist theoretician, he wrote extensively on a variety of subjects which reflected this combination of experience and theory.

A review of the literature on Lafargue illustrates a wide diversity of opinion about his role as a theoretician and writer. Lafargue has been praised by many historians for his role in introducing Marxist ideas to France. His contribution is significant in that he was the key writer and theoretician for the Guesdist party, and as such, he wrote extensively using a Marxist framework. Lafargue both attempted to educate the French about Marxist theory and at the same time tried to relate Marxism to French society.

Claude Willard, a major authority on the Guesdists, has suggested

that the contribution of the Guesdist party was in the introduction of Marxist theories to France:

> Le Parti Ouvrier effectue en France la première diffusion claire, cohérente des idées fondamentales du Marxisme: mécanisme de la plus-value, lutte des classes, nécessité historique de la révolution prolétarienne. C'est le caractère systématique de cet effort théorique qui différencie sans doute le plus les guesdists des autre socialistes.[1]

Willard[2] further maintains that Lafargue was the most important member of the Guesdists in this activity. Jacques Girault[3] and Samuel Bernstein[4] also praised Lafargue for his role in introducing Marxism to France. In Les Hommes du Jour written by a contemporary in 1909, Lafargue is portrayed as a significant interpreter and promoter of Marxist theory.[5] Nevertheless, many of these writers also criticize what they consider to be mistakes of interpretation and serious oversights.[6] Neil MacInnes for one suggests that Lafargue was simply a propagandist[7] not a theoretician[8] of Marxism:

> What Lafargue did introduce, it is claimed, was merely an old tradition of revolutionary propaganda, rich satire, passionately critical of exploitation, but in no sense Marxism.[9]

The point is well taken. Lafargue deliberately sought to reduce much of the Marxist theory to a simple kind of propaganda; his intent was to attract the interest of the working classes by being less theoretical and less abstract. Through these simplifications, some of

Marx's and Engels' theories, particularly the economic ones, were inevitably distorted. In addition, there has been some criticism to the effect that Lafargue and the Guesdists often disregarded the specific economic and political characteristics of France in their analysis. Again, there is some merit in the argument. Lafargue concentrated on concrete concerns of the day which were not specifically confined to France; for example, the rights of the working class and the rights of women were major themes in his writings.

Donald Baker in his work on socialism in the Third Republic, suggested that Guesdist theory:

> ...conflicted with the facts of French working class life and political behaviour. It assumed that the proletariat would be increasingly impoverished, miserable, and alienated. It portrayed working class movements which would become increasingly revolutionary as they become larger. It assumed that workers would someday constitute the majority of society and would dominate society by mass alone, if need be. In none of these respects does the view fit French experience.[10]

Jean Bruhat agrees with this criticism of the Guesdists although he does single out Lafargue as the the only Guesdist who related strongly to the working class and their concerns.[11] The most extreme view is that of Michelle Perrot who suggests that the Guesdists and Lafargue actually discouraged the introduction of Marxist ideas to France.[12]

Criticism of Lafargue's interpretations has also come from Marx

and Engels as Bernard Moss pointed out in his work on the origins of French socialism:

> Guesde and Lafargue were severely chastised by Marx for their practical errors, for indulging in revolutionary phraseology, denying the revolutionary value of reformist struggles and ignoring the progressive role of Radicalism.[13]

Marx's and Engel's criticism of Lafargue and that of the Guesdists is perhaps to be expected in that they were working with translations in different countries. But the disagreements should not be overemphasized. Lafargue's close working relationship with Engels in particular would suggest that Engels had confidence in him as a promoter of Marxism in France.

Many of his commentators have argued that Lafargue's contributions were simply interpretations but there has not been much analysis of the development of his own ideas within the Marxist framework. This thesis will attempt to redress that imbalance. In the opinion of the author, Lafargue's role as a theoretician has been underestimated. In particular, it will be maintained that too little attention has been focussed on his works on the quality of working conditions for the working classes and the role of women. Research for the thesis has been based on an analysis of Lafargue's newspaper articles and pamphlets and his personal correspondence with Frederick Engels. Some of the materials have been translated into English but most of it is in French. All available sources have been used.

INTRODUCTION: FOOTNOTES

[1] Claude Willard, Les Guesdistes (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1965), p. 31.

[2] Claude Willard, Socialisme et Communisme (Paris: A. Colin, 1967), p. 53.

[3] Jacques Girault (ed.), Textes Choisis de Paul Lafargue (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1970), p. 61.

[4] Samuel Bernstein, The Beginnings of Marxist Socialism in France (New York: Russel and Russel, 1965), p. 186.

[5] Henri Fabre (ed.), "Paul Lafargue," Les Hommes du Jour #7 (Paris: Henri Fabre, 1909), p. 1.

[6] J. Varlet, Paul Lafargue, theoricien du marxisme (Paris: Editions Sociales Internationales, 1933), p. 8.

[7] Aaron Noland, The Founding of the French Socialist Party (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 9.

[8] Maurice Dommanget, L'Introduction du marxisme en France (Lausanne: 1967) p.184.

[9] William Cohn, "Paul Lafargue, Marxist Disciple and French Revolutionary Socialist" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, (1972), p. 1-50.

[10] Donald Baker, "Seven Perspectives on the Socialist Movement of the Third Republic," Historical Reflections, 1-2 (1974-75), p. 184.

[11] Jean Bruhat, "Le Guesdisme dans le mouvement ouvrier français," Cahiers Internationaux, (March-April, 1949), p. 81.

[12] William Cohn, p. 1-50.

[13] Bernard Moss, "Producers' Association and the Origins of French Socialism: Ideology from Below," Journal of Modern History, 48, (1976), p. 116.

CHAPTER ONE

PAUL LAFARGUE AND THE RISE OF GUESDISM--1880 TO 1911

The Political and Economic Environment in France

Lafargue's role as a theoretician in the Guesdist party can only be seen accurately within the political and economic environment of France. The development of modern socialism in nineteenth century France was complex. Socialists dominated the era after the French Revolution. Before the 1848 revolution, Comtean positivism, a philosophical system which is based on the premise that all knowledge is scientific, attracted the attention of intellectuals during the 1850's and Marxism gained ground only in the latter part of the century. It became influential as modern political parties emerged in the budding Third Republic whose political diversity and dissension helped make that possible. The French socialist parties adhered to traditions inherited from the Utopian Socialists of the first half of the nineteenth century: Charles Fourier's (1772-1837) utopian vision for society; Claude Saint-Simon's (1760-1825) plan for economic reorganization; Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's (1809-1865) anarchist strain of socialism; and Auguste Blanqui's (1805-1881) idea of revolutionary insurrection. This competition for presenting a true way for socialism in France was complicated by the new theories of the Russian anarchist, Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876) and his rival, Karl Marx (1818-1883).

The political and economic changes which appeared during the Third Republic influenced these traditional socialist groups, each with its own competing ideology. The Third Republic produced a new organization of French governmental institutions, beginning in the 1870's:

> It saw the establishment of the governmental framework that has served the nation, with minor changes and brief interruptions, ever since. It produced the beginnings of the modern party system and of the basic political divisions that were to harden and endure for decades. More fundamentally, it brought the conversion of a majority of Frenchmen to the republican ideal.[1]

The evolving political process was reflected in the constant instability of governments. Between 1871 and 1879, there were twelve ministries; between 1909 and 1914, there were eleven:

> Governments rose and fell with dizzy rapidity, some lasting but a few months, the most durable of them but two or three years, and nearly all of them set up and then soon overthrown as the result of trivial intrigues in the corridors of the Chamber of Deputies - that were rarely understood and scarcely appreciated by the bewildered citizenry.[2]

The French economy was also undergoing an industrial revolution, but France's economic growth was retarded compared with England's and Germany's:

> After 1860, there is a definite slowing down ... it was then that France, formerly the second industrial power in the world, was overtaken first by the United States, then by Germany and fell to the fourth position and a poor one.[3]

The rural economy consisted largely of a peasant class. By 1886, the working class comprised only 36% of the urban populuation. Even by 1911, there were only one million organized workers compared with Britain's three million or Germany's rapid growth from 269,000 in 1895 to three million in 1909.[4] The slow growth in industry, railroad

building, and foreign trade was accompanied by a birth rate which declined during the nineteenth century.[5]

The reasons for France's slow economic progress were numerous. First, with the onset of industrialization, France was at a disadvantage since there were few sources of coal or iron:

> What France lacked was what suddenly became of overwhelming importance--coal and iron. Coal was not relatively scarce in France; it was poor in quality and deposited in small and scattered pockets ... France was not so badly off for iron, but her abundant deposits in Lorraine, because of their high sulpher content, were unusable for modern industrial purposes.[6]

Most of France's commerce was in luxury items, such as wine and silk goods rather than commodities. Little importance was placed on expanding world commerce in such areas. Furthermore, the declining birth rate created rural depopulation in France which in turn adversely affected the economy.

Within the context of this economic background, coalitions of parties--all with conflicting goals and practices--governed in a short-term and haphazard way. The political ideologies of the various parties ranged from the politics of positivism as expressed by Auguste Comte (1798-1857) and Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893). All the fundamental party divisions were firmly established by 1830: monarchism, republicanism, radicalism, and socialism vied for support. These disputes carried over into the era of the Third Republic:

> The Third Republic fought a war on two fronts: against those for whom the Revolution had been a calamity and those who desired above all, a return to the past and against those for whom the task of the Revolution had not yet been completed.[7]

Although the socialist parties did attract a core of followers after 1871, they did not secure the election of many members to the Chamber of Deputies:

> .../ in 1889, only seven members of various shades of socialism were elected to return to parliament (as compared to the 35 seats the German Social Democrats were to win in 1890).[8]

There was a significant weakness amongst the socialists: the parties and groups were fragmented. The socialist left believed that: "le développement de l'individu n'est possible que par une refonte des structures économiques et sociales".[9] The further proliferation of groups and the differing ideologies constituted the major obstacles to unity. In addition, most of the socialist groups did not know clearly how to achieve power in a non-bourgeois manner:

> Si l'on suit le développement de la doctrine et du parti socialiste, depuis 1870 jusqu'à la guerre, on constate qu'une grosse question a dominé constamment les discussions et les Congrès: celle des rapports entre les socialistes et le parti détenant le pouvoir.[10]

Within the socialist ranks, two outstanding leaders of the two parties were Jules Guesde (1845-1922) and Jean Jaurès (1859-1914). Guesde was the leader of the Marxist party the Guesdists, while Jean

Jaurès was the leader of the Parti Socialiste Française. Jaurès' contribution lay in his ability to unify all the socialist factions into one party, the Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (S.F.I.O.), in 1905. The Guesdists on the other hand were important in that they offered a rather literal focus on the revolutionary aspects of Marx's theories.

The roots of Marx's association with the French socialists may be traced back to the 1840's when he was in close contact with Blanqui. Marx and Blanqui differed with regard to defining the idea of a proletarian dictatorship. Thus the Guesdists bridged the era of the utopian socialists and the growth of Marxist socialism in the late nineteenth century.

Guesde began to adopt a less rigid stance in the last decade of the century in order to win electoral support:

> The Parti Ouvrier Français entered into alliance with other political groups and started to win legislative representation. French socialism thus began the large-scale involvement with reform that characterized its history in the last decade of the century.[11]

The main reason for the alliance was that with the decline of Possibilists or Broussists, the Guesdists were able to expand their own policies:

> ... the Guesdists's much discussed reformism of the early 1890's, must be understood as a response to their new situation. With the Broussists reduced to insignificance, Guesde and Lafargue were no

> longer expected to define their positions as the antithesis of the reformist socialism Brousse represented. Thus, only after 1890 could they try to develop a municipal socialism and engage in electoral policies without jeopardizing their separate entity.[12]

Although the party's tactics has been modified to incorporate legislative reform, Guesde retained many of his original ideas:

> Dans ses écrits, dans ses discours, le Guesde de 1913 n'est point très différent du Guesde de 1880: même condamnation du régime capitaliste, même appel à l'action révolutionnaire du prolétariat.[13]

The change in party tactics was reflected in the electoral vote. In the 1880's, the Guesdist vote in the municipal and general elections was almost "negligible, limited to about one percent of the total vote cast."[14] The Guesdists tended:

> ...to gather in isolated sects and formulated a version of Marxism which was too abstract to elicit broad popular appeal.[15]

The main strength of the Guesdists was in municipal elections basically in three regions: the North, the East Centre and the Mediterranean West:[16]

> Les élections municipales de 1888 témoignent de léger progrès: le Parti Ouvrier reprend la maire de Commentry, perdue en 1884, et pénètre dans les conseils municipaux de quelques grandes villes: Armentières, Roubaix, Calais, Montluçon, Roanne, Cette.[17]

By the 1890's, the party was experiencing success in the municipal elections:

> Les élections municipales de ler et 8 mai 1892 furent pour le socialisme français en générale, mais particulièrement pour les guesdistes, une éclatante victoire.[18]

To some degree it is remarkable that the Guesdist Party survived. Throughout his career, Guesde was often sickly, which led to extensive absences. The party had undependable financial support and only one paid propagandist, Alexandre Zevaès (1873-1953). In addition, there were frequent problems with the authorities, concerning the content of the party newspaper. Many of these factors contributed to a spotty publication record for the paper. Between 1890 and 1905, the Guesdists published over 130 weeklies; more than 50% or them lasted less than a year. Only six newspapers had a circulation of over 5000. Yet the party remained strong:

> That Marxism became the most influential ideology in the Modern French Socialist movement was due in large measure to the persistent and indefatigable efforts of a handful of journalists and propagandists who were imbued with the ideas of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.[19]

The level of theoretical knowledge of Marxism in France by the Guesdists in the 1870's and 1880's was much below that of socialists in Germany and England. Their somewhat literal and simplistic translation of Marx's thought led to some inaccuracies and strategic

errors:

> What passed for Marxism in the 1880's, when Jules Guesde, Paul Lafargue, Charles Longuet, and Gabriel Deville began to popularize the new doctrine, was at best an approximation and at worst a caricature.[20]

Perhaps the numerous difficulties in the interpretation and introduction of Marx's ideas may be attributed to the absence of French translations of his works. This also applied to Marx's German commentators, for it was not until the 1890's that the writings of Frederick Engels (1820-1895), Karl Kautsky (1854-1939), Eduard Bernstein (1850-1932), and Antonio Labriola (1843-1904) became known through French translations. Secondly, the weakened theoretical interpretations of Marx resulted from an attempt to reconcile Marx with the past revolutionary tradition of France, primarily with the tradition of Blanqui. There was also resistance to Marx's theories because of their German and English origins. Some of this fear was encouraged by rival socialist parties as Samuel Bernstein indicated about Paul Brousse (1844-1912), leader of the Possibilists, a reformist socialist party based on achieving municipal gains:

> Brousse tried to awaken French chauvinism by contending that the party's program was the handiwork of Marx, that it was a foreign importation.[21]

In addition, Marx and Engels resisted any modification of their theories; as a result, their stance was perceived as inflexible and

arrogant by many of the French socialists:

> There are but two men of talent in London: Marx and Engels. But these two men have one unacceptable pretension: to keep the whole socialist movement within the limits of their brains.[22]

Paul Lafargue (1842-1911) himself reinforced this view by the French of intellectual domination by Marx and Engels:

> You ought to arrange to publish an English translation of Scientific Socialism, you would be surprised to know how useful this pamphlet has been in France ... The important thing at the present time is to find people who throw themselves into the struggle, little by little they develop, "practice makes perfect". The theory has been worked out by you and Marx, one must find agitators to spread it.[23]

The fear of German domination through Marx continued through the early years of the Guesdist Party and served as an additional obstacle to introducing Marxist ideas in France:

> Outside the Marxist circle, the French socialists did not take kindly to the minimum program of the Guesdists, all the less so because Marxist hegemony was suspected to mean German hegemony within the international socialist movement.[24]

A final source of resistance to Marxist theory was the theoretical conflict between the non-Marxian French socialists and the new Marxists. The indigenous French socialist tradition focused on the idealist and utopian aspects of socialist theory, whereas Marxists concentrated on the economic and materialist components:

> Il n'est pas aujourd'hui contestables que l'influence de Marx en France en 1870, était à peu près nulle: Le Manifeste était passé inaperçu et Le Capitale n'avait été signalé que par quelques revues savantes.[25]

Despite this resistance, Marx's ideas slowly became popular and influential in France. Journalists such as Benoît Malon (1841-1893), an independent socialist, and Gabriel Deville (1854-1940), a Guesdist, began to discuss and disseminate some of Marx's ideas. In the Latin Quarter of Paris, students made Marx a requisite for study and discussion, along with Pierre Proudhon (1809-1865), August Blanqui, Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876), and Jules Guesde. The revolutionary fervour of Blanqui appeared counter-productive after the Paris Commune in 1871. Proudhon's theories of a non-political and cooperative labour movement were equally irrelevant, because of his idealistic vision of society. Marx and Guesde seemed to offer a new program for the dispossession of the capitalist class by revolution. The collectivist ideas in Marxism had gained attention in the trade union movement by 1878-79 because the mid-century cooperative movement had failed. Yet cooperative theory had also involved the idea of collective action.[26] Perhaps Marx's son-in-law was not exaggerating when, in 1804, he wrote to Engels that:

> Marx's name penetrates everywhere at the moment; people bow to his knowledge, his "steely" logic, even when they have not read a line of Marx. "Poverty" by virtue of its small size, will be read and will exercise a big influence; and the preface will give it quite exceptional importance. The

> French are as tittle-tattling as old women; everything that is said in it about or against Proudhon, whom the bourgeois economists quote more and more, will be read with interest.[27]

Jules Guesde and the Guesdists

The Guesdist Party depended for its growth and limited success on Guesde. A dynamic and passionate politician, Guesde was both attractive and unattractive as a leader. He was criticized for being inflexible and authoritarian, yet was also perceived as "a persuasive, enthusiastic, and impressive orator, a vigorous unsuppressible journalist, a tireless organizer."[28] Although physically frail, Guesde was able to utilize his energy and passion to draw people to the Guesdist cause:

> Sa force d'improvisation, sa facilité d'élocution, sa correction de style, son art de forger des expressions soit imagées soit à l'emporte-pièce, atteignent chez lui un degré commun à bien peu d'orateurs.[29]

He was one of the few socialist leaders with such a reputation and easily competed with contemporary leaders and was able to match Jean Jaurès and Réné Viviani in eloquence, and Alexandre Millerand in parliamentary tactics.[30]

Jules Guesde began his political career at the age of eighteen. Educated by his middle class father, Guesde became a confirmed aetheist after reading Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. During the 1860's when he was inspired by Proudhon's works, he began to call himself an

anarchist. While exiled in Switzerland for his involvement with the Paris Commune of 1871, he became concerned with problems of collective ownership of private property. After some exposure to the works of César de Paepe (1842-1890), a Belgian socialist and former Proudhonist, Guesde returned to France in 1876 and became a Marxist. As the editor of l'Egalité, a paper with a circulation of 5000, and leader of the Parti des Travailleurs Socialistes, Guesde was determined to establish a working class party, which was focused on the trade union movement and based on Marx's theories. Although not an original theorist, Guesde was a popularizer of Marxism. He believed in acquiring strong local support for the party. In the northern part of France, the Guesdists had some success:

> ... his party penetrated the local life of the textile towns to an extraordinary degree and used traditional festivals and recreational societies for the service of the party; it organized balls, concerts, country fêtes, competitions, billiard and card games, dramatic societies and shooting clubs, and in this way, gave a new revolutionary content to traditional activities.[31]

A weakness of Guesde was that he was often intransigent in the face of political conflict, and refused to associate with other socialist groups. His inflexibility also resulted in the loss of good political opportunities. He alienated many in the trade union movement by demanding their loyalty and refused to address directly the problems of the poor because of his concern with the Marxist theory. In 1894, he ignored the Dreyfus Affair and stood in stark contrast to other

politicians, such as Jaurès, who were voicing their outrage and benefitting from their involvement in terms of publicity. In addition, Guesde refused to acknowledge the role of anticlericalism in political issues of the day. Guesde was to realize the importance of some of his concerns many years later in 1905, when the Parti Ouvrier amalgamated with the Parti Socialist Française under the leadership of Jean Jaurès, to form a single socialist party, the Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (S.F.I.O.).

Paul Lafargue and the Guesdists

Along with Jules Guesde, Paul Lafargue was the other major influence in the Guesdist party. Lafargue's role in the party was as an organizer and theoretician: his most significant contribution was in interpreting and popularizing Marxism in France. An eclectic and satirical writer, Lafargue has been praised for his dedicated effort in introducing Marxist concepts and explaining them in simple terms for the average reader. As Girault described: "Lafargue est un propagandiste de la plume, utilisant le plus souvent possible la voie journalistique."[32]

As many political activists were to discover, Lafargue realized that poverty was not a sufficient source of encouragement for people to embrace Marxism and the Guesdist Party. As a result, discussions about injustices and the need for a socialist framework did not automatically appeal to all industrial workers. A simple explanation was not

therefore enough and his writings had to be more than simple reiteration.

> A l'égard du marxisme, l'attitude de Guesde n'est pas celle d'un disciple, mais d'un confrère ... Les dispositions de Lafargue étaitent autre. Cet homme qui estimait l'étude sans en avoir la passion, bien chaperonné par la fine Laura, et le vigilant Engels, avait sûr le marxisme une ouverture privilegié. Il a sûrement souhaité d'être un bon vulgarisateur, un fidèle héritier d'une pensée qu'il rêverait.[33]

In this way, Lafargue made a significant contribution by not only explaining Marxism but developing his own ideas based of course on a Marxist framework.

Lafargue, the repatriated son of an immigrant, had been born in Santiago, Cuba in 1842. His father was a French farmer from Bordeaux who had emigrated to Santa Domingo. His mother was the daughter of a Frenchman and a Caribbean Indian. Little is known about the family until 1851, at which time they settled in Bordeaux where Lafargue began his early education. He earned a baccalaureate in Toulouse in 1861 and immediately left for Paris. He began his studies in pharmacy and then switched to medicine at the University of Paris. As a student, Lafargue became interested in Republican politics. He was subsequently expelled from university for his anti-religious comments in a riot at an international congress of students at Liège in 1865. He acquired a police record and was excluded from registering in any French university for two years. At Liège, Lafargue had broadened his

contacts by meeting such people as Charles Longuet (1839-1903), who was an editor with La Rive Gauche, and Blanqui, who had recently escaped from a French prison with the assistance of friends.

Fluent in both French and Spanish, Lafargue decided to leave France and travelled to Spain, then to England. In 1866 while residing in London, Lafargue attended an organizing meeting about the First International at Karl Marx's home. After meeting Marx, he became an avid supporter of his theories and admirer of the man:

> Marx's mind was like a warship with her steam up, always ready at a moment's notice to start out in any direction on the sea of thought.[34]

During the late 1860's, Lafargue would often keep Marx company:

> For years I accompanied him on his evening strolls in Hampstead Heath, and it was during these walks through the meadows that I acquired my economic education. Without himself being aware of it, he developed before me step by step, the contents of the first volume of "Capital" on the scope he then wrote it.[35]

The more personal nature of their relationship was further enhanced by his marriage to one of Marx's daughters, Laura.

Larfargue's admiration for Marx was not reciprocated at first. Despite his support, Marx thought Lafargue to be a Proudhonian and held many reservations about his political dedication and understanding. When Lafargue became engaged to Laura in 1866, Marx expressed fatherly concern about Lafargue's future and suggested that he complete his medical studies. Marx was not enthusiastic about Lafargue's wish to

enter politics; he was concerned for his daughter's financial security. Despite these reservations, Marx did like Lafargue and found him to be a warm personality, with an "endearing clownishness".[36]

Lafargue developed a much closer relationship with Engels than with Marx, for Engels acted as an advisor, a confidant, and as a source of financial support for both Laura and Paul for the remainder of their lives. The Lafargues depended on Engels' weekly stipends; the support was so extensive, that:

> ...countless letters Lafargue wrote Engels have never been published because they contain nothing but monotonous demands for money...[37]

Engels also provided detailed criticism and advice to Lafargue about his writings and political work.

Lafargue spent two full years in England from 1866 to 1868. During this time, he continued to be torn between his interest in politics and the stability of a medical career. He dutifully studied for his medical exams and improved his English but did not give up his political activities. In 1866 he became a member of the French Branch of the General Council of the First International in London. The General Council was the leading body of the International organized by the International Working Men's Association in 1864.[38] Lafargue also was named General Secretary of the International for Spain, a post he was to hold until 1869. In this role he was to discourage support for Bakunin and maintain the strength of the Marxists in Spain. Lafargue

also helped organize sections of the International in France (1869-1870) and Portugal (1871-1872) and was a delegate to the Hague Congress in 1872.

In 1868, Lafargue returned to France. When the war with Prussia broke out in 1870 and the Paris Commune took place in 1871, Lafargue travelled to Bosost, Spain, with his family to avoid political harassment. The French police pursued him which caused him to move to Saint Sebastian where he and the family stayed until December, 1871. At the end of that year, Lafargue moved on to Madrid, where in the summer of 1872, he was to organize and gain support for a Marxist Federation. Both Marx and Engels eagerly followed Lafargue's moves in Spain as there was great concern about the extent of Bakunin influence there.

In late 1872, Lafargue returned to England where he spent the last years of his exile. In England Lafargue made a final decision not to pursue a medical career. Much of his reluctance was due to an increasing skepticism about the credibility of the medical profession: both of his children had died at an early age despite medical treatment.

During the 1870's, Lafargue established a photo-lithography and engraving shop in London. This temporary career allowed his hidden artistic talent to flower. Lafargue also designed an electroplating technique that was to be used for decades. Despite his creativity, Lafargue was not financially successful in this business venture and at

this time began to request regular financial assistance from Engels. Lafargue's difficulties with money almost appeared to be a character flaw: he could not make a financial success of any of these jobs. Lafargue's wife, Laura, retained her sense of humour but acknowledged Lafargue's problems in photo-engraving, insurance and journalism:

> If Paul had been born a hatter, little boys would have come into the world, without heads.[39]

One benefit of Lafargue's financial troubles and frequent unemployment was a continued interest in political activity. Lafargue became actively involved in the Parti des Travailleurs Socialistes, a socialist party formed at the Third National Labour Congress in Marseille in 1879. It was through this party that he met Jules Guesde and consequently formed a partnership that was to last the length of their lives.

During 1879, Guesde and Lafargue corresponded regularly while Lafargue was in London and began the formation of a new workers' party in France. Although jailed for a six month period in 1879, Guesde retained his energy and dedication. Two years later, in 1880, Guesde arrived in London and met with Marx, Engels, and Lafargue. At that time, the four of them drafted the basic program for the new workers' party. At the fourth National Labour Congress in Le Havre in 1880, this program was adopted as policy.[40] The name of the party was changed to the Fédération du Parti des Travailleurs Socialistes. Another faction of reformists split at this time to form the Union des

Chambres Syndicales de France. This union was short-lived, surviving only two congresses before disappearing in 1886 from lack of support.

After establishing this organization, the next task of the Guesdists was to motivate the workers to rally behind the Guesdist party. With this in mind, Lafargue planned to write to explain some of the economic truths of society to the worker population and in this way make the workers want to change their conditions. This in turn would supposedly inspire the workers to join an independent militant working class party. The problem of how to attract the workers was a constant concern.

In 1882, two years after amnesty had been granted to the communards, Lafargue returned to France. Since 1880, he had had contact with colleagues in France and was ready in 1882 to begin working on how to develop Marxist theories which would motivate the working classes and which would explain fully the implications of Marxism. At the same time, Lafargue maintained his political involvement in the Guesdist party by advocating the role of the party as the legitimate defender of Marxism in France. This clear definition of the role of the Guesdists lead to a number of conflicts and alliances with other political parties. The first of these parties was the Possibilists.

In 1882, at Saint-Etiènne, the Guesdists under Guesde and Lafargue, and the Possibilists dominated the Parti Ouvrier Français. The Possibilists remained strong before becoming independent in 1890

and Jean Allemane (1843-1935) formed the Parti Ouvrier Socialiste Révolutionnaire, or the Allemanists. However, the Guesdists could not align themselves with the Possibilitists because of their support of reformist measures and direct economic action. The Possibilists survived for two more congresses and the Allemanists continued to operate until 1897.[41]

A rival movement to the political parties was the trade-union movement. After the Paris Commune in 1872 trade unions were allowed to reorganize. Throughout the decade different trade societies emerged; membership in trade unions grew from 25,000 to 40,000 workers by 1879.[42]

After years of supporting different socialist parties, the trade unions formed their own syndicalist movement. In Lyons, in 1886, the Fédération des Syndicats et Groupes Corporatifs de France was founded. This congress represented Blanquists, Possibilists, anarchists, independents, and Guesdists and supported the formation of a trade union federation which would pursue socialist aims independent of the political groups.

This goal of independence, however, was not achieved and Guesde and Lafargue dominated the second congress in 1887 at Moutluçon. It was only a few years before the federation was absorbed by the Guesdist party itself.

This take-over was not, however, popular and the trade unions seeking to maintain an independent federation amalgamated under the

name of the Fédération Nationale des Bourses de Travail in 1891. The Allemanists provided leadership for the federation; the purpose of the organization was "to eliminate Guesdist influence and organize all unions into a single independent labour confederation."[43] The unions were concerned with the immediate problems of the working classes and advocated the use of strike action and legislation for an eight hour day. In contrast to Lafargue and Guesde, their orientation was towards reformism, in particular, the use of a general strike to reach their goals.

As the end of the century approached, Lafargue's active political involvement declined as his publications increased. His last notable political accomplishment was in 1891. He gave a propaganda speech in Fourmies, a glass-making town in the northern part of France. A demonstration of workers occurred and several of them were fired upon by troops. Nine people were killed and Lafargue was jailed on the grounds that he incited the workers to riot. While he was in jail in 1891, Lafargue campaigned for and won a seat in the Chamber of Deputies.[44] Lafargue did not retain his place in the Chamber very long. He spent very little time in the Chamber because of his dislike of formal debate. Despite spending much of his time in his constituency, he lost the next election in 1893. Ironically in the same election that Jules Guesde obtained a seat, Lafargue remained Secretary of the Parti Ouvrier Français for some years, but his interest in active politics declined. Jean Jaurès had become the

Party's leader and he worked assiduously to unite all the socialist groups. In 1904, he formed the Parti Socialiste.[45] Guesde and Lafargue did not play a critical role in the party's electoral successes in 1906 and 1910. After the second election Lafargue retired.

Lafargue had already become somewhat unpopular with socialist groups. With an inheritance of approximately £7,000 from Engels in 1896, Lafargue and his wife bought an estate at Draveil. Lafargue's home had "thirty rooms, a smaller house for the gardner, billiard rooms, a studio, an orangerie, and greenhouses."[46] This ostentatious style of living combined with Lafargue's previous reputation as a miser made his credibility as an orthodox socialist questionable; nevertheless:

> ...their home at Draveil was a required pilgrimage for important socialists on their way through Paris, and on these tours, the Lafargues were often the object of awe.[47]

In 1911, Lafargue and his wife, Laura, committed suicide by injecting poison. They had made a pact years earlier to end their lives when old age began to take its toll:

> ...je me suis promis de ne pas dépasser les soixante-dix années, j'ai fixé l'époque de l'année pour mon départ de la vie et j'ai préparée la mode de l'éxécution pour ma résolution, une injection hypodermique d'acide cyanhydrique.[48]

Lafargue's passing was sincerely mourned. Lenin (1870-1924) himself

attended the funeral and praised Lafargue by referring to him as "one of the most gifted and profound disseminators of the ideas of Marxism."[49]

The Writings of Paul Lafargue

Lafargue always combined political activity and publications. From the mid-1860's, Lafargue wrote for such publications as La Rive Gauche (1866), l'Egalité (1880-1883), Le Devenir Social (1895-1897), Le Mouvement Socialiste (1903-1904), La Libre Pensée (1870). Lafargue's writings reveal his diverse interest in various aspects of the nature of man and society.

One of the major themes in Lafargue's writings concerning the nature of man and society was the struggle between two forces: reason and idealism. He supported Marx's perceptions and advocated the use of the scientific method instead of the idealist approach which was popular at the time. A consequence of this theoretical stance was the rejection of religion as it was only a made-made rationalization to explain God, original sin, the universe, and human misery. Lafargue's later writings consisted of extensive discussion about the concept of God, the origin of the soul, and the existence of good and evil. His purpose in analyzing these concepts was to establish the superiority of the nineteenth century as an age free of idealism. Lafargue believed that societal problems could be assessed in concrete and materialist terms: solutions to societal problems were within man's grasp. In the

fight against idealism, Lafargue often referred to Proudhon in his early writings as a protagonist and as a theorist who should be admired: "notre maître bien-aimé Proudhon..."[50] Lafargue respected Proudhon's support of the working class and their need to empower themselves. Eclectic in his use of sources and references, Lafargue admired not only Proudhon, but Blanqui, all the while depicting himself as a Marxist.

Lafargue analyzed idealism in history with reference to Marx and Darwin, at the same time referring to the materialist conception of history. History was felt to be a reflection of the economic stages that society passed through:

> It was not the idea of God or of Progress or of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and Justice, that motivated man and changed human societies; rather to account for the movement of history, economic relationships had to be discovered and understood.[51]

Engels' writings were as much a source for Lafargue's ideas as were Marx's. Lafargue relied extensively on Engels' Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, and a commentary on Lewis H. Morgan's book, Ancient Society. Morgan believed that man would eventually master private property and not allow it to control him. His predictions of the future visualized:

> ...democracy in government, brotherhood in society, equality in rights and privileges, and universal education as foreshadowing the next higher plane of society to which experience, intelligence and

knowledge are steadily tending.[52]

Engels agreed with these predictions as did Lafargue. In fact, this train of thought was identical to Lafargue's ideas, as Engels was quick to point out to Laura two weeks after publication of Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State: "Paul will be mad after translating it; there are things in it, just in his line..."[53]

These discussions about the origins of the family and property with Engels and Marx stimulated Lafargue to write about the concepts of justice and good. In the Revue Philosophique, he published several commentaries on the origins of justice. His study led him to an historical examination of Greek society and Christianity.

In his historical studies, Lafargue used both Morgan and Engels as sources. Giambattista Vico (1668-1774) was an additional source of information. Lafargue used Vico's theory that "ultimately, development in institutions and in human nature are mutually conditioning aspects of a single historical process".[54] Vico also provided a basis of analogy for Lafargue, a comparison to contemporary societies:

> Vico, il pose comme une loi générale, du développement des sociétés, que tous les peuples, quelque soient leur origine ethnique et leur habitat géographique, cheminent par les mêmes routes historiques: de sorte que l'histoire d'un peuple quelque congué est une répetition de l'histoire d'un autre peuple, par venue à un dégré supérieur du développement.[55]

"Vico's...ability to perceive the recurrent features of human cultural

development, and his use of critical models of historical explanation..."[56] attracted Lafargue. Lafargue's own discussion about history indicated that he believed in a spiral version of history, where there is no linear progress. Instead, old stages reoccurred, modified by intervening economic and social phenomena. Communism was an example of such a modification.

In addition to the more general concepts of the role of man and society, Lafargue also spent much of his time writing pieces on contemporary issues: the condition of the working class, art and literary criticism and the role of women. For example, fiction was to be harnessed in the education of the worker. In an interesting dialogue on The Religion of Capital Lafargue made fun of the worker's belief in capitalism:

> Q. What is your name?
> A. Wageworker.
> Q. Who are thy parents?
> A. My father was called Wageworker; my mother's name is Poverty.
> Q. Where was thou born?
> A. In a garret under the roof of a tenement house which my father and his comrades built.
> Q. What is thy religion?
> A. The religion of capital.
> Q. What general duties does thy religion enjoin upon thee?
> A. Two principally: first the duty of Abnegation; second, the duty of Toil.[57]

Through art, Lafargue focused on the moral character of society and how the working class needed to establish their identity by rejecting bourgeois values. He perceived artists to be the domestics of the middle class; art of contemporary salons naturally reflected the

bourgeois condition of society. The depictions of the ideal bourgeois woman in the theatre were good examples of this focus:

> ...mysterious, seduction, available, weak, true, good, and above all ready to satisfy the needs and all tastes, however perverted...[58]

For Lafargue, literature reflected social conditions:

> ...la littérature est le reflet des rapports sociaux; elle est une arrivée de classe; elle est un moyen de connaissance. C'est à ce triple point de vue qu'il se place toujours quand il étudie les auteurs et les oeuvres.[59]

Lafargue revealed his literary ability in later writings. His favourite devices were paradox and analogy. Two well-known examples of analogy were his comparison of "parasites in the natural world to those in the human world: judges, clergy and any officials and functionaries of the state"[60] and of the economic cycles in society to "progress from debauched youth to vile decrepitude, the deteriorating body ravaged by diseases like syphillis and gonorrhea."[61]

Victor Hugo and his supposedly bourgeois works were one of his main targets for criticism, because of their bourgeois attitudes:

> Today they are Pantheonising Victor Hugo; a predestinated name, writes one journalist, since it comprises the initials of both Virgil and Homer! No one would ever have believed that the French could be so silly![62]

With the view of criticizing bourgeois attitudes, Lafargue also chose

to write about literary and stage productions:

> Dans ses appréciations, Lafargue part souvent d'une conception très mécanique des rapports entre littérature et structure sociale.[63]

Lafargue did write about a variety of topics based on a Marxist framework and yet Marx and Engels were not always supportive of Lafargue's ideas. He was criticized for some errors and exaggerations that misrepresented Marxism to the public. For example, when referring to Lafargue's article on Leroy Beaulieu's criticism of Marx, Engels suggested:

> In short, your articles will be effective if you eliminate the principle errors which I have indicated. But in your reply, you will have to be far more serious, I think most decidedly that you should read Capital seriously from beginning to end, with Beaulieu's book beside you...I have spoken frankly and I hope you will not be annoyed with it. The matter is too serious, if you missed your mark, the whole party would suffer for it.[64]

Marx, in particular, always had mixed feelings about Lafargue's abilities. He would compliment and attack Lafargue alternately. Three months before Marx's death, Marx wrote Engels and called Lafargue, "Lafargue, the last Bakuninist,"[65] because of Lafargue's lack of understanding of Marx's theories.[66] However Marx did agree that one of Lafargue's contributions was in making Marxism understandable for the public:

> Lafargue analyzed theories of Marx, in a clear and

> simple style, marked with a touch of satire...and made Marxism palatable to the reader.[67]

Engels corroborated this view after Lafargue's translation and publication of Socialism: Utopian and Scientific:

> ...the effect in France was enormous...people are too lazy to read thick books like Capital; the influence of a pamphlet is so much quicker.[68]

In addition to guidance about Marxist theory, Engels also played a major role in providing Lafargue with encouragement and advice in his writings about political issues in France:

> The most important thing in the elections is to establish once and for all that it is our party which represents socialism in France, and that all the other more or less socialist factions--Broussists, Allemanists, to pure or impure Blanquists--have been able to play a part beside us only by virtue of the dissension incidental to the more of less infantile phase of disorders is over, and the French proletariat has reached full consciousness of its historic position.[69]

Lafargue's purpose in writing for journals was to analyze both Marxist concepts in depth and to educate the working class. He believed that propaganda was a useful strategy in terms of attracting the interest of the working class:

> Lafargue lacked confidence in the revolutionary energy of the masses...he attached more importance to propaganda than to the revolutionary struggle itself.[70]

A concern with the success of explanation and propaganda led both

Lafargue and Guesde to consider the need for more strategy. In response to a perceived need for relevance, Lafargue began to write about the need to support more socialist participation in municipal government.[71] Although such participation could never be equated with the revolutionary ideal, Lafargue believed that it would provide a forum for ideas and critical analysis. The time for revolution would occur when the socialists controlled all the municipal seats, not Paris alone:

> ...after the revolution, municipalities along with worker societies, would be the basis for the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship which would be needed to combat the inevitable reaction and to begin the task of nationalizing the means of production.[72]

Two subjects which attracted Lafargue's attention and served as examples of his own ability as a theoretician and educator of the working classes were the role of women and the living conditions of the working classes. Each of these topics reflected Lafargue's belief in Marxism and his intent to interest the working class in a relevant and practical manner in Marxist theory. The consequent chapters will analyze each of these topics in order to assess his contribution.

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CHAPTER TWO

LAFARGUE AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Paul Lafargue's political writings singled out the role and status of women as a major concern for the Marxists, with particular reference to bourgeois and working class attitudes:

> The bourgeoisie has thought and still thinks that a woman ought to remain at home and devote her activity to supervising and housekeeping and caring for her husband and manufacturing and nourishing children.[1]

Lafargue suggested that in the past there were economic reasons for such a role for women; however, in the nineteenth century, the traditional role for women was outdated. The concept that a woman's role be restricted to household functions did not make sense in a capitalist society where many household duties were carried out by capitalist labour.

Lafargue began to write about the woman's question in 1870. He emphasized the subjugation caused by maternity:

> Dividing history into four major stages: hunting cultures, agricultural societies, the city-state era (i.e. Athens and Rome), and the modern bourgeois and working class society, Lafargue concluded that all women were enslaved because they were condemned to bear and raise children.[2]

In his later writings in the 1880's, Lafargue focused on the special benefits of motherhood. This was a distortion of Engels' thesis that the socialist revolution would release women from that particular responsibility. Even in 1906, in L'Humanité, Lafargue was

championing the role of women as mothers:

> Maternity and love will permit women to reconquer in the communist society of the future, the superior position they occupied in primitive society.[3]

Lafargue's view of maternity obviously did not provide the foundation for a broad role for women:[4] But, like many fellow Guesdists, he believed that such exaltation of motherhood did not limit women's role but would instead allow their special responsibilities to be recognized:

> Sexual selection, not material interests, will become one of the most active factors in the perfecting of the human race, motherhood and love will permit woman to regain her high position.[5]

Lafargue's early views on the woman question were preoccupied with the question of motherhood and reflected a superficial analysis. However, in later writings, Lafargue did come to appreciate that women's role was part of a much larger problem:

> By that point so radically had Lafargue altered his analysis and so radically had events and society changed that he no longer spoke of the enslavement of women because of child-bearing and child-raising; now he expressed fear that the institution of motherhood might disappear completely.[6]

In the 1840's and 1850's, women's rights had been an important goal for some of the utopian socialists. Fourier wrote and spoke

extensively about the need to broaden women's rights through educational equality and reformed marriage laws. The Saint-Simonians also supported female equality:

> ...woman who at first was a slave, or at least in a condition bordering on slavery, was associated little by little with man, and acquired each day a great influence in the social order, and how the causes which to this day have determined her subordination have been successfully weakened and shall at last disappear and carry away with them that domination, tutelage, and perpetual minority which even now are imposed on women, and which would be incompatible with the social state of the future which we forsee.[7]

However, by the late nineteenth century, the conservative Catholic reaction that was beginning to develop made female independence seem old fashioned. The conservative attitude was reflected in the idealization of motherhood. Education was seen as a method of preparing women for marriage and motherhood. Women held traditional views about themselves; for example, it was felt that women should not vote nor should they work after marriage. With the growth of the middle class came an idealized vision of woman generally; women accentuated their femininity and economic dependence on their husbands. The demands of women's groups for equal work and equal pay violated the popular ideal of women as "domestic, delicate, and dependent upon the support of a father or husband."[8] Women were to model the qualities of cleanliness, obedience and diligence. Domestic service was a

popular source of employment since it trained young women in these qualities with the eventual goal of marriage.

A common perception was that women's desire to work outside of the home would adversely affect the health of the children and the family and in fact contribute to a "dégradation morale générale et la destruction de la vie familiale en particulier."[9] However, the irony was that women had always worked; "that formal employment should terminate at marriage was novel."[10]

The critics of women working outside the home attempted to reduce the number of hours women worked, and to prevent women from obtaining certain kinds of work. Women's inferiority, both physically and morally, were cited as reasons for limiting the hours of work.

Legislation during the last part of the century did establish a limit on the number of hours and kind of work for women. However, the intent of the legislation was not to restrict women's rights but to protect their health:

> ... first of twelve, then of eleven, and in some cases ten hours per day; it prohibited most work at night, on Saturday afternoons and in particularly dangerous places, such as underground mines; it set basic health and safety standards and it forbade the rehiring of new mothers within four weeks of giving birth.[11]

Both the middle classes and the working classes disapproved of extensive independence for women:

> The rate of reforms most clearly reflected the widespread cultural belief that women's work outside the home and in the city was basically unnatural, a belief dear to middle class reformers but shared by many workers as well.[12]

In order to achieve respectability, the working classes embraced many of the middle class values. The focal point of a middle class woman's life was the family and its emotional health and happiness. Leisure time for the wife was considered part of an upper class lifestyle. In such leisure time, cultural and intellectual activities could be pursued:

> Since middle class men engaged in finance, commerce, industry, civil service and the professions, they themselves could not rise above the grubby process of moneymaking ... They could and did remove their women from employment and encouraged them to be as beautiful, as delicate, and as cultured as money, good fortune and application allowed.[13]

Such leisure was to be used seriously by middle class women to improve the quality of life for the family. In the "cult of domesticity, home became a sanctuary and the woman its guardian angel."[14]

Accompanying this leisure was more isolation for the wife and mother. The sex roles became more and more separate: woman was manager of the household and children, and the man was the provider and worker outside the home. Supposedly, woman's virtue would enable her to be the best model for the family, and eventually, to improve the world.

Much of the philosophical criticism levelled at women and their emancipation sought to base itself on scientific proof supporting women's traditional role:

> ...Women cannot emerge from the occupations of housekeeping without violating the laws of nature and history. They proved to their complete satisfaction that woman is an inferior being, incapable of receiving a higher intellectual education and of furnishing the combination of attention, energy and agility demanded by the profession in which she was entering into competition with man. Her brain, less voluminous, less heavy, and less complex than that of man's is a child's brain.[15]

The ideal middle class woman was believed to possess superior strength in the areas of virtue and moral fibre; however, she was the inferior to man physically and intellectually:

> Phrenologists equated brain size with intellectual capacties, which automatically left women behind.[16]

The foundation for Lafargue's mature writings on women was the publication of Engels' The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State in 1884. Since the book was not translated into French until 1893, Lafargue chose to summarize parts of the book in Le Socialiste in 1886. His thesis that the patriarchal family made its entry into the world escorted by disorder, crime and degrading violence was certainly rather revolutionary for the time, and somewhat contradicted Marx's vision of the patriarchal state as peaceful.

In these articles, Lafargue analyzed the Oresteai of Aeschylus and did not spend much time relating his analysis to a materialist framework. Lafargue's article was so well known that "for a brief period, it was the authority for French socialists on the question of women."[17]

Lafargue used Engels' ideas as a framework within which he could analyze the role of women. His analysis was based on a specific view of history held by Marx and Engels. Both Marx and Engels believed that history could be divided into stages: savagery, barbarism, and civilization. Marx and Engels were interested in examining social relationships in order to explain the evolution of class antagonism and the emergence of the state. In the historical stage of middle savagery, Engels perceived the division of labour as:

> ...purely primitive, between the sexes only. The man fights in the war, hunts, and fishes, produces the raw materials of food and the tools necessary for doing so. The woman looks after the house and the preparation of food and clothing, cooks, weaves and sews. They are each master in their own sphere, the man in the forest, the woman in the house. Each is the owner of the instruments which he or she makes and uses; the man of the weapons, the hunting and fishing implements, the woman of the household gear.[18]

Man owned the cattle and as the cattle increased in numbers, the wealth of man also increased. This increase in production produced new social relations:

> All the surplus which the acquisition of the necessities now yielded, fell to the man; the woman shared in its enjoyment, but had no part in its ownership. The "savage" warrior and hunter had been content to take second place in the house, after the woman; the gentler shepherd in the arrogance of his wealth, pushed himself forward into the first place and the woman down into second. And she could not complain. The division of labour within the family had regulated the division of property between the man and the woman. That division of labour had remained the same; and yet it now turned the previous domestic relation upside down, simply because the division of labour outside the family had changed.[19]

Lafargue used this analysis in his own writings in order to explain how woman's role became secondary in the face of man's acquisition of wealth in the family unit.

Engels believed, as did Morgan, in the concept of unrestricted sexual freedom at the primitive stage. Group marriage was the norm and as a result, jealousy and incest were later inventions. Due to this group marriage, descent could only be traced through the mother, since the father was unknown. Through time, group marriage became obsolete as more and more restrictions arose as to admissable sexual intercourse:

> ... group marriage is characteristic of savages, the pairing family of barbarism, and monogamy of civilization.[20]

Engels described the state of women in primitive times as communistic:

> Communistic household implies the supremacy of women in the house; just as the exlusive recognition of a natural mother because of the impossibility of determining the natural father with certainty, signifies high esteem for the woman, that is, for the mother.[21]

As a result woman's status in primitive times was very high, an interpretation Lafargue used to criticize the contemporary view of man's superiority over woman. In turn, according to Engels, as wealth increased, the right of inheritance became very important:

> ...mother-right had to be overthrown and overthrown it was; the overthrow of the mother-right was the world historical defeat of the female sex.[22]

Woman lost many of her rights and status according to Marx and Engels:

> The men seized the reins in the home also; the woman was degraded, enthralled, the slave of man's lust, a mere instrument for breeding children.[23]

As a means of insuring the paternity of the children, the wife's fidelity became important:

> Monogamy thus developed in no way connected to love but as a way to protect property, a marriage of convenience ...It was the first form of the family to be based, not on nature, but on economic conditions--on the victory of private property over primitive, natural, communal property.[24]

As a result, in primitive societies, the division of labour was equal between the sexes; a communal system existed. With monogamy and

private property, women's role deteriorated significantly in status. Historically, both Marx and Engels believed that the oppression of women was a sign of a barbaric society and cited Fourier as the first to suggest such a view:

> The change in a historical epoch can always be determined by the progress of women toward freedom, because in the relation of women to man, of the weak to the strong, the victory of human nature over brutality is most evident. The degree of emancipation of women is the natural measure of general emancipation.[25]

Marx and Engels believed that such a barbaric trait existed in modern society:

> The humiliation of the female sex is an essential feature of civilization as well as barbarity. The only difference is that the civilized system raises to a compound equivocal, ambiguous, hypocritical mode of existence in every vice that barbarity practices in the simple form.[26]

In The Condition of the Working Class, Engels discussed the conditions of modern women. Before the industrial revolution, there was a natural division of labour among the women and men and children. With the onset of the industrial revolution, women worked long hours away from home; thus contributing to the deterioration of the family. The emancipation of woman required that women participate in all production, not just domestic labour.

To answer much of the criticism about man's superiority over women,

Lafargue suggested that women's role in the past was significant:

> Bachoten, Morgan and a crowd of anthropologists have revised the opinion of the historians and philosophers about the role played by the women in the past. They have shown that everywhere the paternal family, which subordinated woman to man, had been preceeded by the maternal family, which gave the first place to women.[27]

Lafargue examined Greek history to obtain some examples of this historical pattern:

> While the Spartans among whom matriarchal customs persisted still continued to call her Despoina, the mistress of the house, the sovereign, the other Greeks gave to the wife, the name, Domar, the subdued, the vanquished.[28]

Another source of evidence of the once superior status of women was the naming of the Greek goddesses:

> The intellectual superiority of woman caused her to be deified before man in the primitive religions of Egypt, the Indies, Asia, and Greece and caused the first inventions of the arts and trades, with the exception of metal working, to be attributed to goddesses and not to Gods.[29]

Lafargue suggested in a rather satirical manner that women may have a natural superiority to men. The physical superiority of women can be demonstrated in that women live longer. A woman's body is stronger than a man's as shown during the reproduction of the species; man's role is fertilization, whereas women have to continue to carry

the child and look after the child after birth. Women's intellectual faculties have naturally developed as a result of this expanded biological role of the women. The role has:

> ...obliged woman to reflect, to calculate, to think of the morrow and to look ahead at long range, must necessarily have developed her intellectual faculties.[30]

That women have been deified at times in history was also evident to Lafargue:

> Woman is for the careless and improvident savage, a providence, she is the proud and prescient being who presides over his destinies from birth to death; man, making his religions with the events and the intellectual acquisitions of his daily life, was thus obliged to begin by deifying woman.[31]

When society became patriarchal and man took over the higher position in the family and society, he:

> ...systematically began to deprive woman of the means of development, material, and intellectual, thus making her a force retarding progress.[32]

As a result, woman's development has been restricted since humanity entered into the period of civilization and private property. Throughout this economic development, woman's role has been "constrained and confined and she cannot contribute in an effective way.[33]

Both Fourier and Saint Simon had supported such a view:

> They believed that man had made chattels and servants of women, and that nothing proved this better than the way that women were given in marriage and the wifely duties laid upon them by custom and by law.[34]

Lafargue also cited Darwin's work on the sexes as scientific evidence that women and men were equal; neither one was superior to the other. Woman's brain had profited by the progress of the masculine brain since one sex transmits the qualities it has acquired to the other:

> It is fortunate that the equal transmission of the characteristics of both sexes has been a general rule in the whole series of mammals; otherwise, it is probable that man would have become superior to woman in intellectual power as the peacock is to the female in ornamental plumage.[35]

As a result of this transmission, both men and women have been affected:

> If woman has profited by the brain growth of man, he has in turn, been retarded in his development by the sluggishness in the development of woman's brain, produced by the reduction to the smallest minimum of intellectual activity to which he has condemned her.[36]

Capitalism had played a significant role in emphasizing the fact that woman's brain is not that of a child:

> As capitalism has not snatched woman from the domestic hearth and launched her more ferociously

> than man, so it has been careful to overthrow the economic, legal, political and moral barriers which have been raised to seclude her in the marital dwelling.[37]

Lafargue believed that Darwin had refuted the idea of man's supposed superiority over women. However, Darwin had actually explained the roles of the sexes as two diverse areas of responsibility which reflected the progress in civilization. Much of this discussion focused on:

> ...the philosophical debate juxtaposing nature/culture. . . . . sensuality/reason, passivity/activity as the primary female/male dichotomy underpinning male authority...[38]

Darwin supported women's role as mothers and managers of the home since:

> ...in the competitive outside world where the 'fit' would survive, there was no place for woman with her greater tenderness and less selfishness.[39]

Darwin's theory was somewhat male-oriented by supporting the view that woman was a weaker individual.[40]

Despite his lack of understanding of Darwin, Lafargue contrasted modern society to ancient societies and suggested that modern society had delegated a role to women, in which they had little meaning in their lives:

> Les femmes de notre noblesse et de notre bourgeoisie croupissant dans la paresse, ne sont

> que des Frofrou sans cervelles et sans cours, que l'on toilette avec de la soie, du velours, des dentelles, et des plumes.[41]

Lafargue himself believed that woman had two burdens to bear in a modern capitalist society:

> ...the miseries of free labour and also the chains of the past. When her toil in the shop ends, her labour in the household begins...Motherhood, the sacred, the highest of social functions, becomes in capitalist society a cause of horrible misery, economic and physiologic.[42]

Lafargue's did not suggest that motherhood was completely negative. He sympathized with some of Proudhon's views concerning motherhood. Proudhon was a strong believer in preserving the family and he viewed men and women as different:

> ...women are the happiest and most useful as wives and mothers; they are the creators and preservers of the family, of the most tightly knit and important of social groups, because it is inside it that the child becomes a social and moral being.[43]

Where Proudhon and Lafargue differed was in domesticity:

> Le grossier de réactionnaire Proudhon enformait la femme dans ce dilemme: ménagère ou courtisane. Ni ménagère, ni courtisane, mais libre sera la femme lorsque le travail aura secoué le joug du capital.[44]

In response to such conservative attitudes about women's role,

Lafargue attacked the bourgeoisie for its traditional perspective on women and for its resistance to change.

> Art reflected the conditions of society as the artists toed the line and worked conscientiously to produce on canvas or in words, the bourgeois ideal of women: mysterious, seductive, available, weak, true, good and overall ready to satisfy all needs and all tests, however perverted.[45]

According to Lafargue, both the philosophical establishment and the moralists, argued against the woman's movement and declared that it would violate the sacred role of the family, whereas he saw these roles as complementary.

Lafargue criticized contradictions in societal attitudes about women. The philosophers who criticized bourgeois women for the reputation of domesticity also supported the advent of capitalism. However, capitalism promoted the break-up of the family by forcing the wife to work outside of the home. Lafargue believed that the industrial changes created by the capitalist economy found expression in the mentality of the bourgeoisie. The prime example of such a transformation was that of the institution of marriage. According to Lafargue, the bourgeoisie viewed marriage as an association of capital, more than a union created for pleasure. As Marx and Engels suggested: "The bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production."[46] Wives sometimes earned more than husbands and children earned more than their fathers. The capitalist activity of individual family members

created economic antagonism in a family:

> ...the daughters and wives of the small bourgeoisie as well as those of the working class, entered into competition with their father, brothers and husbands.[47]

In a critique of "L'Autre" by George Sand, Lafargue suggested that women should break out of traditional roles:

> Mais George Sand, ce n'est pas la pitié qu'il faut réclamer. Si vous croyez que le "pardon abaisse," la pitié humilié. Tant que la femme ne gagnera pas elle-même sa vie, tant que l'enfant restera à la charge de la femme, le marriage et toutes ses conséquences seront nécessaires: car après tout le mariage n'est qu'une affaire d'assurances. Voyez ce qui se passe dans les districts manufacturiers: partout où l'industrie a pu en utilisant la femme et l'enfant, leur donner le moyen de vivre indépendants, les femmes aiment mieux ne pas se marier et garder par devers elles leur liberté. Les défenseurs de la femme auront beau entasser sentiments sur sentiments, phrases sur phrases, ils ne changeront pas d'un iota la condition sociale des femmes.[48]

Lafargue concluded that the abolition of private property was the answer to woman's plight:

> But the modern antagonism will not end with the victory of one sex over the other, for it is one of the phenomena of the struggle of labour against capital, which will find its solution in the emancipation of the working class in which women as well as men are incorporated.[49]

More specifically, Lafargue championed the specific question of

restricting female labour as Marx and Engels suggested:

> The standardization of the working day must include the restriction of female labour insofar as it relates to the direction, intermissions, etc. of the working day...[50]

Many of Lafargue's contemporaries supported the limited role of women. Proudhon's views were well known, depicting women as either housekeepers or prostitutes. He believed that intellectually and morally, women possessed one-third of the value of men. Michelet also praised the domestic role of women, and Comte believed that women should stay at home. Feminism was not a subject that garnered extensive support.

> It is true that Montesquieu, Helvétius and Condorcet demanded an equal education for them but in the 19th century, feminism was principally supported by socialists.[51]

Lafargue criticized contemporary theorists for their damning position of women as home-makers and expected that "women will free themselves this century."[52] Industrialization and the machine would help free woman from her traditional role.[53]

This view was not shared by Marx and Engels who perceived the machine to be an additional source of exploitation:

> Insofar as machinery dispenses with muscular power, it becomes a means of employing labourers of slight muscular strength, and those whose bodily

> development is incomplete, but whose limbs are all the more supple. The labour of women and children was therefore the first thing sought for by capitalists who used machinery.[54]

When considering this aspect, Lafargue was forced to qualify his position but he continued to maintain the principle.[55] This limited role for women was reflected in all aspects of society in France. In particular, the political characteristics of the Third Republic in France contributed to this lack of support for women's rights. Women's rights had been of some interest during the French Revolution in 1789 and in the 1840's. In 1848, Victor Considérant (1808-1893), lobbied for women to receive the vote; in 1851 a bill was introduced by Pierre Leroux (1799 - 1871), a writer and socialist, requiring a woman's vote at municipal elections. Women themselves were not as politically active as in France as they were in other countries. A few feminist newspapers and clubs were started in the 1840's and 1850's. In 1836, Madame Herbinot de Mauchamps founded La Gazette des femmes; Jeanne Deroin (1805-1894) founded La Politique des femmes in 1850.

The question of women's rights resurfaced during the Third Republic. The legal restrictions against women may have encouraged the development of the feminist movement:

> Women began to perceive the sharp contrast between their position of wealth or security or their newly achieved professional status and the legal humiliation which they continued to undergo.[56]

There were few political parties which supported the feminist cause. The concern of the Republicans was that women would support a clerical view on political matters since they usually attended church regularly and were close to the clergy.[57] The only major political parties that supported the feminist cause were socialist parties. As reflected in a vote in the Chamber of Deputies in 1906.

Legislation affecting women had remained the same for most of the century and reflected women's restricted role:

> It is difficult to imagine the full extent of the disadvantage suffered by women in France during the nineteenth century and that one of the principle causes of her inferior status was the law itself.[58]

Generally, a woman's legal rights in France varied according to her civil status. If she was single or widowed, she possessed many of the rights of a man. However, if she was married, her rights were restricted. For example, married women did not have the same rights as their husbands in questions of adultery, property, and children. Obedience and duty were expected of wives:

> A man's wife had to reside wherever he chose and he was entitled to use force to compel her to do so. If she committed adultery, she was liable to imprisonment for a period of between 3 to 24 months,...but he could engage in it with impunity. He committed a crime only if he actually maintained a concubine in the conjugal home, and then he was punished only by a fine of 100 to 2,000 francs. If he chanced to discover her committing adultery and

> killed her, he would not be guilty of murder--but she was not allowed to attack him in similar circumstances.[59]

In terms of property, the husband possessed the right to manage the property, although both he and his wife may have been joint owners. In the event of separation the husband still possessed control over the property. The husband also had complete rights to make decisions about the children in the family. In the event of a husband's death the widow had to consult with two close relatives about major decisons concerning the children; in turn, these relatives would have the right to take away the woman's children if she remarried.

Much like women's legal status, the role of women in the workforce also was limited. Generally, job opportunities for women were found in domestic service, agriculture, and industry. The industry jobs were usually in the areas of garment making and the textile industry and were located outside of the home. However, the majority of women worked in agriculture and domestic service.[60] Most of these jobs were held by women from the farms and the urban working classes and were perceived as low status employment.[61]

Before industrialization, all family members worked, including the wife. Women and men performed different functions, for example, women managed the home, children, and labour such as weaving. As a result, women shared responsibiliity with their husbands and in fact possessed substantial influence. With increasing industrialization a few more

employment opportunities for women ouside of the home developed, although these opportunities were still limited because they tended to be only in certain kinds of work:

> The presence of women in the work force was by no means a new phenomenon in the nineteenth century. New only was their increased visibility in paid employment in the expanding urban workforce and in the newly mechanized manufacturing sector.[62]

Women constituted a significant percentage of the workforce:

> ... women's presence was undeniable. By 1866, they constituted 30% of the industrial labour force, a proportion which increase gradually to 38% by 1911.[63]

In these new positions, women did not earn the same salaries as men. They often earned half the wages of men since their wages were considered as part of a contribution to the family's wages. The demand for equal wages in the latter part of the century signified the transformation from the value placed on the family as a working unit to the value placed on an individual as an employee.

In addition to restrictions in law and the workforce, few educational opportunities were provided for women. Girls' schooling concentrated on domestic and artistic skills. Professional schools did not admit women until the latter part of the century; the Paris Faculty of Medicine, 1868 and the Sorbonne, 1880. The resistance to female students was strong, and women were not able to interact as regular

students. Often, women students had to study in isolation from the male students.

Education was viewed as a necessity in order for a woman to obtain practical knowledge relevant to managing a household and raising children. Extensive education was considered a waste, however. Education was still not perceived as a possible second choice for women who did not choose marriage or domestic duties. In fact, the education of women was only advocated to help the "weaker sex" achieve a happier and more satisfying marriage.

The question of women's rights were also reflected in the debate about women's sexuality and health.

> En même temps que l'effort pour moraliser la maternité, un autre mouvement va contribuer à faire disparaître la nourrice: c'est l'hygienisation.[64]

Another issue that attracted substantial controversy was the question of abortion, although it was often ignored by the advocates of women's rights because of its sensitivity:

> ...though it is true many of the leading feminists avoided becoming involved in the birth control debate, the question of women's rights to abortion was recognized by several as a crucial issue. As early as 1891, the feminist-anarchist Sevérine (Caroline Remy) leapt to the defense of women who had no recourse to abortion.[65]

As a way of addressing the women's issues and demands, Lafargue

suggested that women join the Guesdists in working toward the revolution.[66] However, in terms of political strategies, the Guesdists made a mistake in connecting the rights of women and the rights of the proletariat:

> In France, though the socialists always coupled the liberation of the proletariat and of women, these two were in fact economic rivals. The proletariat having got the vote were by no means keen to share it with women. Women's lower wages perhaps needed to be raised to prevent undercutting, but their competition at work threatened unemployment.[67]

Yet, women's demands were given little attention. The rationale was that when the revolution came, women's rights would be addressed:

> The theory was splendid, for in remaking society, all oppressed groups might gain; but the practice gave women a less distinctive voice than that of Anglo-American feminists who had no serious socialist movement to rely upon and who worked up their own set of demands.[68]

In consequence, the feminist-socialist groups were unable to achieve the independence they did in England or Germany.[69]

Between 1896 and 1899, women did gain some prominence in the party when Valette replaced Lafargue as national secretary of the P.O.F.[70] Valette had been a teacher and a theorist. She developed a new theory called "sexualism" which was intended to unite the socialist and feminist veiwpoints. In addition to Valette, there were many other feminist-socialists who worked towards feminist goals within the

Guesdists.

In 1880, Léonzie Rouzade (1839-1916), author of The World Turned Upside Down, a feminist novel, ran as a Guesdist candidate for the municipal council of Paris with the support of Lafargue and Guesde. This economic equality would occur as a result of the socialist state. Paule Mink was another feminist-socialist who worked in the Guesdist Party. Mink was a popular speaker and a long-time worker in the party. Attempting to combine the socialist and feminist goals she believed in, she spoke about a variety of issues: socialism, revolution, free thought, marriage, and the role of women.

As a party member with no special status Mink agreed with Lafargue and believed that the socialist revolution would resolve the inequalities for women. With economic equality would come liberation. As Lafargue advocated, women would be able to receive adequate education and receive the proper respect for her maternal responsibilities. Mink called for:

> ...equal education for women hoping thereby to release them from the influence of priests, to free prostitutes from the sons of the bourgeoisie, and to encourage female proletarians to support revolutionary action by their men.[71]

Ironically, however, Mink created support for restricting women's role to the home:

> Her descriptions of the suffering endured by working women, low wages, importuning bosses,

> degradation into prostitution, the double burden of work in the factory followed by work at home, aroused the sympathy of her audiences, but tended to confirm their belief that the immediate solution was total rejection of work outside the home for females.[72]

Another significant feminist-socialist was Madeleine Pelletier (1876-1939), a medical doctor, who criticized Lafargue's reformist orientation for the socialists because of its negative impact on women's concerns.[73] Pelletier also feared the onset of a socialist revolution in that the working class held a very traditional point of view on women and were resistant to change. In fact, Pelletier did not believe the socialists were the answer for women's concerns:

> She had concluded that the left wing offered nothing to women. Socialists continued to 'humor' women only with platitudinous phrases based on the principle embalmed in their platform...they dismissed reforms proposed by feminists as bourgeois and premature.[74]

One of the difficulties of the feminist-socialist groups was that they did not provide a theoretical basis for a separate group. Also, from the point of view of the faction-ridden socialist parties, separate groups were discouraged. In addition, many of the socialists felt that since women were accepted on equal terms ideologically, there was little need for individual females organizing for their particular set of issues. Another difficulty was that many of the socialists themselves believed in protective measures for women, measures that

were perceived by many feminists-socialists as discriminatory.[75] Furthermore, the failed integration of the feminist and socialist cause can be attributed to:

> 1) the discussion in party sections centered on electoral tactics, but not only did women not vote; they could not even participate in electoral meetings, because the voters' registration card was required for entry.
>
> 2) ...the atmosphere of the party sections was that of a male club.[76]

The most serious difficulty for the feminist-socialists was the attitude of their fellow socialists. The belief of most of the socialist parties was that many of the inequities for women would be resolved after a socialist state emerged. As Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling explained:

> Clearly, there will be equality for all, without distinction of sex. Thus, women will be independent: her education and all other opportunities as those of man. Like him, she, if sound in mind and body (and how the number of women thus will grow) will have to give her one, two, or three hours of social labour to supply the wants of the community and therefore of herself. Thereafter she will be free for art and science, or teaching or writing, or amusement in any form.[77]

As a result, the rights of women played a minor role in the quest for improved rights for the working class:

> Mais, en attendant la révolution, le parti répondait essentiellement aux besoins de ses

> membres et aux desirs de ses électeurs, c'est-à-dire à des hommes qui ne s'étaient pas en général inquiets du rôle des femmes.[78]

This difference in viewpoints became more critical in the 1890's as the socialist parties worked towards parliamentary gains. A formal political group for women finally developed around the turn of the century, the Groupe Féministe Socialiste.[79] The Groupe Feministe Socialiste tried to address both working class demands and women's concerns but only minor socialist party support accompanied their efforts. Two factions existed within the party--one was led by Elizabeth Renaud (1846-1932), a governess, the other was led by Louise Saumoneau (1875-1950), a seamstress. The first group attacked the women's question in terms of male oppression, whereas the second group concentrated on the economic context and working class demands in order to improve women's rights. Both factions within the party wanted to provide a materialist and scientific basis for women's demands within the socialist framework, although there was little success in uniting the two causes. It was difficult to convince male socialists of the need for immediate female equality and the bourgeois feminists resisted the socialist demands. In addition, the feminists demands for equality were severely criticized by opponents who questioned that the position of women would be improved by working in the same exploitive conditions as men. Several feminists recognized the need to integrate the working class and female demands, instead of joining the bourgeois feminist

movement.

The difficulty in integrating the two causes stemmed partially from the fact that some of the feminists were bourgeois and could not understand the working class concerns. Also, women were not eligible to attend P.O.F. party meetings as voting members, as reflected in the demand at the Congress in Lyons in 1901 for a:

> ...women's column in the party newspaper and a guarantee of admission for women to party and electoral meetings.[80]

Most importantly however, Saumoneau failed to appeal to the working class women:

> ...like male socialists, she did not broach specific issues of direct interest to women. Following their pattern, she proposed no ameliorative action beyond supporting the socialist program, addressed audiences of women in abstract terms, and deferred their hopes to a future world.[81]

At the Congress of Tours in 1902, women's issues became a source of division. Because of the factions at the Congress, and exclusion of a women's group, women had to fragment themselves by aligning with different sections. This division reinforced the difficulties of articulating women's concerns at the Congress:

> The Congress of Tours brought to a head three factors which had previously hindered the growth of the socialist women's movement in France: the early

> start in formal equality, the division into factions, and the lack of a clear justification for a separate organization.[82]

After this congress, most of the feminist groups in the party disbanded, as did the Groupe Feministe Socialiste. Party membership was decreasing. Outside of the socialist groups, there was limited activity in terms of supporting women's rights. The activity that did occur concerned bourgeois feminists. Engels' analysis was used by Lafargue to interpret the conditions in France. Although Lafargue did add some of his own perspectives, he did not alter the original theories of Marx and Engels with reference to women. Instead, he chose to explain how capitalism and private property had adversely altered women's role in society. Furthermore, he wished to educate the working class and fellow socialists about the need for an expanded role for women. Lafargue supported the special talents of women, as in their role as mothers; however, he believed women's role should not be restricted to the home. In the context of French politics and theory at the time, Lafargue's major contribution lay precisely in his theoretical discussions about the need for an expanded role for women.

CHAPTER TWO: FOOTNOTES

[1] Paul Lafargue, "The Woman Question," The Right to Be Lazy and Other Studies (New York: Gordon Press, 1905), p. 111.

[2] William Cohn, p. 90.

[3] Paul Lafargue, "La Femme," L'Humanité, 1906.

[4] Charles Sowerwine, "Women and Socialism in France," (Wisconsin, Ph.D., 1973), p. 75.

[5] Paul Lafargue, "The Woman Question," p. 138.

[6] William Cohn, p. 92.

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CHAPTER THREE

LAFARGUE ON THE CENTURY OF PAIN, MISERY, AND CORRUPTION

Many of Lafargue's works focussed on themes dealing with the quality of life for the working classes. His primary purpose in writing about the living conditions for the working classes was to urge improvement and to raise the awareness of the working class itself.

Lafargue focussed on such issues as wages, hours, and living conditions. He suggested that instead of liberating the working man, the French Revolution had helped to preserve dismal living conditions:

> By demanding the Right to Work, the French working man had imposed on his entire family all the so-called advantages associated with bourgeois progress: long hours, low pay, and miserable living conditions. Men and women and children had exhausted themselves in factories all over France, having apparently voluntarily surrendered joy and health and liberty.[1]

Lafargue had not exaggerated the difficult living conditions of the working class. Housing was overcrowded and rundown; slums existed in which entire families were forced to live in one room. Due to inadequate wages, a worker's diet tended to consist mainly of starches. The wages themselves varied greatly according to the individual's occupation, experience, age and sex. Women and children were usually paid half of a man's salary. Wages were particularly low for unskilled workers, such as docker workers and construction labourers.

> De 1851 à 1870, Emile Levasseur estime que les salaires des ouvriers se sont élevés de 22 à 23 pour cent ceux des ouvriers ordinaires de 15 pour cent ceux des femmes de 8 pour cent.[2]

A day of rest was sometimes provided; however, the workers did not always receive all the benefits of a day of rest. Often workers would work through twenty-four hours on a Saturday in order to make up for a Sunday off.

Although a law of 1874 allowed for the appointment of a group of inspectors who would monitor and control the operations of the law of 1848, the law had little impact. In 1885, a law excluded workshops and areas where fewer than twenty workers were employed:

> ...in the Department of Seine, which comprises Paris, we find for the year 1887, a population of working people of 83,012 adult males, 28,373 women and 37,650 male and female children subject to inspection and employed in 30,201 establishments. Not more than 3,336 of these were subject to the legal limitation of the hours of labour established by the decree of 1848.[3]

An increase in working hours was accompanied by the introduction of machinery. Many employers felt that machinery would make work easier; therefore, the hours of the day were increased. After such long days, little time was left for activities other than eating and sleeping.

Women and children were used extensively in some factories especially those in the textile industry. They provided cheap and easily controllable labour.

> In the early textile industry, women represented at least 40 percent of the labour force and children under 16 represented another 10 - 15 percent.[4]

The average age of children working in the factories was eight or ten, although at times, it was as young as five.

The working conditions in the factories themselves were often dangerous. The fact that machinery was not protected contributed to a number of accidents.

> Many kinds of work involved intense heat, dampness, or stench and dust. In general, no precautions were taken that would add to the expense or difficulty of production.[5]

The hazards for workers were extensive, consisting of maimings, occupational diseases and death. The life expectancy of working people could sometimes be reduced by half as a result of the hazards. Henry Steele, a contemporary of Lafargue's in England, claimed that the French worker enjoyed some freedoms that the English workers did not:

> ...provided there is no deliberate wasting of time or shirking of work, the workman has the utmost freedom in the workshop, and any attempt to limit this freedom is resented as deeply as an attack on the economic position of wages and hours. The French workman attached an importance, altogether unrecognized in England, to ... personal freedom and treatment, courtesy of foremen and masters, and so on.[6]

Lafargue disagreed and evidence indicates that he was probably right:

> The companies long continued to subject their men to a rigorous discipline: an elaborate system of fines, penalized unpunctuality, insubordination, drunkenness, and a whole list of carefully foreseen

professional mistakes.[7]

Lafargue chose to draw attention to the poor standard of living for the working class by satirizing some of the "rights" workers had. Many of Lafargue's writings on the working conditions of the working classes related directly to Marx's and Engels' descriptions. In Capital, Marx and Engels suggested:

> It is not the normal maintenance of the labour-power which is to determine the limits of the working day; it is the greatest possible daily expenditure of the labour-power no matter how diseased, compulsory, and painful it may be, which is to determine the limits of the labourers' period of repose.[8]

In his pamphlet, Rights of the Horse and the Rights of Man (1904), Lafargue satirized the current conditions of the working class. Using a satirical extended metaphor of the rights of men and the rights of horses, Lafargue described how each species had a hierarchy of classes. As there are powerful classes, there are also those who do not wield power. The wage worker was an example of the latter to Lafargue:

> Capitalist civilization has endowed the wage worker with the metaphysical rights of man, but this is only to rivet him more closely and more firmly to his economic duty.[9]

The capitalist, as a member of the powerful class, assigned those rights:

> I make your free, free to earn a wretched living and turn your employer into a millionaire, free to sell him your liberty that you may not sell and that is the right to pay taxes.[10]

At this point, Lafargue developed his analogy to the horses and suggested that horses like man were divided into classes:

> Aristocratic horses like capitalists do not work and when they exercise themselves in the fields, they look disdainfully with a coupon clipper's contempt, upon the human animals which plow and seed the land.[11]

Satirizing the high status of many kinds of horses, Lafargue commented:

> It is fortunate that these horses, who can count more authentic ancestors than the horses of Orleans and Hohenzollern have not been corrupted by their high social station.[12]

As with man, the proletarian horses were exploited:

> ...but the capitalist class through deference for the aristocrats of the equine race, concedes to the working horses, rights that are far more solid and real than those in the 'Rights of Man.'[13]

Lafargue listed the injustices that working people must face in comparison to the lot of horses:

> I raised a tempest in the Chamber of Deputies when I asked that women, 2 months before and 2 months after confinement, should have the right and means to absent themselves from the factory. My proposition upset the ethics of civilization and

> shook the capitalist order. What an abomination! To demand for babies the rights of colts![14]

Lafargue objected to the care offered animals when man goes abused:

> The more delicate souls of the bourgeoisie have in every capitalist country organized societies for the protection of animals. A company which works its labourers 14-16 hours a day requires from its dear horse, only 5-7 hours...[15]

Lafargue's parting advice to the working class was to "...boldly demand for yourselves, your wives and your children, the rights of the horse."[16]

Lafargue's theme in all of his published works was designated to encourage the working class to take responsibility for itself by rejecting bourgeois work values and by paying attention to their own instincts and needs. The checkered past of the socialist movement, made it an uphill battle. The idea of working class in a political sense had been slow to develop in France. In the 1850's in France, seventy percent of the population was still living on the land.[17] The working classes were concentrated in the urban centres of France and were few in number:

> The workers in factories were in the minority, for example: in sixty-three departments with a total population of thirty-two million, there were employed in factories with more than ten workers, only 670,000 men, 245,000 women and 130,000 children.[18]

This small working class was the result of slow industrialization in France. The onset of industrialization had been retarded due to several factors, such as the large farming population which discouraged movement to the urban centres. This same large farming population was largely made up of peasants who did not require manufactured goods. This contributed to a weak demand for such goods. In addition, luxury consumer goods had been a traditional focus of France's exports. These luxury goods were usually produced by individual craftsmen, thus ensuring the continuation of such individualistic artisans. Even as late as 1906, the size of the working class population was small:

> Industrial workers accorded far less than a fifth of the total active production, while the number of master, independent or isolated workers and white collar employees was almost as high as that of wage earners.[19]

With few peaks and valleys, the revolution of 1830, had witnessed the development of a few working men's organizations and newspapers:

> We became firmly convinced we were living during the first days of a dying civilization...two months on the boulevards of Paris was enough to turn a liberal into a socialist.[20]

By the 1840's widespread concern was beginning to emerge over the condition of the working classes.[21] The plight of the working classes was a source of concern for many segments of society:

> Tous ces organismes lutteront pour conquérir les réductions de la journées de labeur, les augmentations de salaires, des garanties de réglementation et d'hygiène.[22]

By 1848, the high unemployment had given the movement an additional push most notably after the publication of the declaration, The Right to Work (1848), Unionism became popular when in 1868, the government allowed organizations to exist parallel to employer's organizations. Of course, the most impressive advance came through the Paris Commune. But that triumph was short-lived. In the crackdown which followed the establishment of the government, the working classes lost many of their rights. Léon Jouhaux (1879 - 1954), a trade union leader, explained:

> The French proletariat was as if decapitated, deprived of almost all the militants who had laboured at the revival of the workers' organizations in the last years of the Second Empire; organizations dissolved, clubs dispersed, meetings were prohibited; such was the situation in the years which followed the tragic Pentecost of 1871.[23]

The recovery of workers' rights was very gradual. Small unions of under one hundred members were tolerated but large organizations and national associations such as the International of 1872 were prohibited.

The Waldeck-Rousseau law of 1884 reflected a change in the government's attitude toward labour and the permanent legal right of association. The Le Chapelier law of 1791, which forbade associations

and made strikes legal was repealed, as were the sections of the penal code concerning illegal interference with industry and labour. Workers could organize in local unions although the union had no legal capacity nor could it own property. As a result of the Waldeck-Rousseau law, trade unions grew in number:

> Within 10 years, some 400,000 workers were organized in 2200 local unions, national federations of textile workers, miners, railwaymen, printers, and other trades were formed.[24]

Freedom of association after 1884 was still not a guaranteed right. The police banned associations and meetings of different trades. The Napoleonic Code prohibited meetings of more than twenty people without police permission. In 1881, this law was modified so that a group was required to inform the police of a meeting:

> But all this did not amount to full individual liberty, the methods of the police and the rights of the judiciary were not radically altered...It was still possible for men to be imprisoned without trial and without charge, to be beaten up, and to be subjected to endless interrogation.[25]

As a result, unions were not successful for a number of years:

> Unions tended to be ad hoc organizations forced to meet a particular crisis...the life of unions tended to be short; their membership could not expand, nor their funds accumulate.[26]

Working organizations slowly increased in number; the continuing

intervention of the state served only to emphasize the individualistic concerns of the workers.

As a consequence, the political and legal suppression accompanied the slow industrialization in retarding the socialist movement. Lafargue however, did not put all the blame on the restrictive nature of the state. The working class suffered from numerous inadequacies and what he conceived as a lack of fighting spirit. A lack of education was in part the main culprit.[27] The working class did not possess an advanced level of vocabulary or knowledge. This inability to create a sophisticated language and therefore culture was one of the obstacles that only would be eliminated by revolution. The capacity of the working class was limited in his opinion and primarily by their belief in the work ethic. He attacked the dogma of work: 'work is good' and 'one should work hard' as ends in themselves. It was a functional necessity and not an ideal state.

> Quand, dans notre Europe civilisée, on veut retrouver une trace de beauté native chez l'homme, il faut l'aller chercher chez les nations où les préjugés économiques n'ont pas encore déraciné la haine du travail.[28]

The Greeks and Spaniards provided examples of two cultures which despised work. However, there have also been races for which work was an organized necessity: "les Auvergnats; les Ecossais, ces Auvergnats des Iles britanniques; les Gallegos, ces Auvergnats de l'Allemagne; les

Chinois, ces Auvergnats de l'Asie."[29] In our society, Lafargue claimed that the proletariat were the ones who loved work, the ones most affected by this dogma of work:

> ...le prolétariat trahissant ses instincts, méconnaissant sa mission historique, s'est laissé pervertir par le dogma du travail.[30]

Often these workers worked long and hard:

> ...courbes sur leurs terres, les autres acoquinés dans leurs boutiques, se remuent comme la taupe dans sa galerie souterraine, et jamais ne se redressent pour regarder à loisir de la nature.[31]

Lafargue suggested that the workers were like animals, unaware of the environment surrounding them and totally involved in the 'blessings of work.' Napoleon's comment: "Plus mes peuples travailleront, moins il y aura devices"[33] reflected the revolutionary principle of the right to work. Lafargue believed it to be ironic that the sons and daughters of the revolution accepted twelve hour working days. Lafargue cited an Englishman from 1770 who explained:

> Des ouvriers ne devraient jamais se tenir pour indépendents de leurs supérieurs. Il est extrêmement dangereux d'encourager de pareils engouements dans un Etat commercial comme le nôtre ou peut-être, les sept huitièmes de la population n'ont que peu ou pas de propriété.[33]

In reply Lafargue commented:

> Nôtre époque est dit-on, le siècle du travail; it est en effet le siècle de la douleur, de la misère et de la corruption.[34]

The basis of the preoccupation with work Lafargue believed could be found in the French Revolution and the Rights of Man:

> O miserable avortement des principes révolutionnaires de la bourgeoisie! O lugubre présent de son dieu Progrès!...Introduise le travail de fabrique et adieu joie santé, liberté; — adieu tout ce qui fait la vie belle et digne d'être réçue.[35]

Lafargue echoed Marx's and Engels's criticism that the French Revolution "...abolished feudal property in favour of bourgeois property.[36] Both Marx and Engels believed that it had allowed the bourgeoisie to thrive through land speculation and fraudulent army contracts. A secondary cause of the emphasis on the gospel of work was of course, the industrial revolution.

The modern machine had created more difficulties for the working classes:

> A mesure que la machine se perfectionne et abat le travail de l'homme avec une rapidité et une précision sans cesse croissantes, l'ouvrier, au lieu de prolonger sans repos d'antan, redouble d'ardeur.[37]

Lafargue challenged the proletariat to reject such a work ethic and return to its natural instincts:

> Mais pour qu'il parvienne à la conscience de sa force, il faut que le prolétariat foule aux pieds les préjugés de la morale chrétienne économique, libre penseuse.[38]

Lafargue continued to ascribe much of the blame to the working class themselves. The manufacturers in fact:

> ...ne peuvent plus trouver la matière première pour satisfaire la passion désordonnée dépravée, de leurs ouvriers pour le travail.[39]

The working class was very diverse in composition[40] and possessed a strong sense of individualism and independence. This latter orientation was reinforced by Proudhon whose ideas "appealed to the libertarianism of the French, as well as their dislike of scientific dogmas."[41] As a result, the Proudhonists believed in their own independence:

> In general, the Proudhonists believed in the workers' own economic action through unions, credit mutuals, and producer cooperatives rather than the political action or collective ownership.[42]

Lafargue also believed that if the working class was not united, it was because of their limited political activity. During much of the nineteenth century, the working class had reacted passively to the increasing hardships in working conditions. It possessed little political awareness of the need for improvements or the means to gain improvements. This lack of political awareness could be attributed to

their inexperience in organized political activity and their lack of education. Extensive illiteracy existed in the 1860's and contributed to the workers inability to express their concerns and to develop policies.

The desire of the working class was to possess the advantages of their employers and to become employers themselves. There was little self awareness of the need to improve their plight. In fact, this individualism contributed to general support for employers as the providers of jobs and money:

> Many of the workers long maintained the same way of life as the small employers: their goals, by no means impossible, was one day to become masters themselves, if not as patrons, then at least as independent maîtres or ouvriers...Property, independence and craftsmanship were their ideals. They remained strongly individualistic in outlook and in that sense petit-bourgeois...it was less a negation of the existing order that they wanted than its reorientation in their favour.[43]

Lafargue's immediate palliative was to reduce the number of hours actually worked:

> ...the working day has a maximum limit conditioned by two things...by the physical bounds of labour-power...Besides these purely physical limitations, the extension of the working day encounters moral ones. The labourer needs time for satisfying his intellectual and social wants.[44]

He was of course, alone in advocating this answer. The French utopian

socialists amongst others had provided a similar point of view, but they did not have a framework and philosophy on which to base their concerns, and in this sense Lafargue's contribution was unique. Like Marx, Lafargue's future state of social harmony, offered the worker more leisure. In his pamphlet, Le Droit à la Paresse (1809), Lafargue addressed many of the concerns of the working class. He asked the working classes to recognize their own political strength and to make use of their power to undertake change. Leisure, or "laziness," paresse, was to be as much a right as the right of a job. Intended as a refutation of the 1848 Right to Work, the main theme of Le Droit à la Paresse was the need to raise wages and reduce working hours in order to improve living conditions.

Lafargue's book was received positively in socialist circles. It was published in Le Nouvel Observateur in December 1869 and Le Monde in May 1870. The book went through three editions between late 1860, and 1883 when it was published as a pamphlet. Much of Lafargue's sarcastic and flamboyant style of writing contributed to the impact of this book. Cohn has described it as:

> ...celebration of life or what life could be if the proletariat would see the extent to which they had been duped and manipulated by their capitalist master.[45]

Its theme was a criticism of the exploitation of the workers arising from an obsession with the hard work ethic. Lafargue believed that to

live one's work in such a context was a delusion. According to Lafargue, the strong work ethic had to be ignored by the working class in order for them to succeed and achieve improvements:

> Il faut qu'il retourne à ses instincts naturels, qu'il proclame les Droits de la paresse, mille et mille fois plus nobles et plus sacrés que les Droits de l'homme concoctés par les avocats métaphysiciens de la révolution bourgeoisie.[46]

Lafargue had always advocated a reduction of the hours of labour and an increase in the number of holidays:

> ...pour puissancer la productivité humaine, il faut réduire les heures de travail et multiplier les jours de paye et de fêtes, et le peuple français n'est pas convaincu.[47]

Here he put the cart before the horse. Machines would take over production if the hours of work were reduced; not the other way around, namely, that more machines would bring about a shorter work day. Lafargue suggested that with a reduction in labour hours, the labourers must consume their products to ensure employment for as many as possible:

> Afin de trouver du travail pour toutes les non-valeurs de la société actuelle, afin de laisser l'outillage industriel se développer indéfiniment, la classe ouvrière devra, comme la bourgeoisie, violenter ses goûts abstinents et développer indéfiniment ses capacités consommatrices.[48]

Lafargue challenged the working class to change these working conditions:

> Si, déracinant de son coeur le vice qui la domine et avilit sa nature, la classe ouvrière se levait dans sa force terrible, non pour réclamer le 'Droit au Travail,' qui n'est que le droit à la misère, mais pour forger une loi d'airain, défendant à tout homme de travailler plus de trois heures par hour.[49]

Lafargue, like Marx, believed that after the revolution, all could be assured full employment. The working day would be reduced to a maximum of three or four hours a day. His opinion also directly reflected the views of the French Utopians of the early part of the century. Fourier, in particular, supported shorter working days.

Naturally, Lafargue did not place the whole of the blame for the lack of a coherent and politically motivated working class on the workers themselves. Another difficulty was the idleness of the capitalist class:

> Parce que la classe ouvrière, avec sa bonne foi simpliste, s'est laissé endoctriner parce que, avec son impetuosité native, elle s'est précipitée en aveugle dans le travail et l'abstinence, la classe capitaliste s'est trouvée condamnée à la paresse et à la jouissance forcée, à l'improductivité et la surconsommation.[50]

At the beginning of capitalist production, the capitalist was a man of reasonable and steady habits. However: the capitalist soon began to

fulfill a double function and became unproductive:

> Pour remplir une double funtion sociale de nonproducteur et de surconsommateur, le bourgeois doit non seulement violenter ses goûts modestes, perdre ses habitudes laborieuses d'il y a deux siècles et se livre au luxe effréné, aux indigestions truffées et aux débauchés syphilitiques, mais encore soustraire au travail productif une masse énorme d'hommes afin de se procurer des aides.[51]

The capitalist class adapted itself to a style of life where an aversion for work existed. To protect themselves from a backlash from the proletariat, they have surrounded themselves with guards, police, magistrates, and jailers:

> En presence de cette double folie des travailleurs, de se tuer de surtravail et de végéter dans l'abstinence, le grand problème de la production capitaliste n'est plus de trouver des producteurs et de décupler leurs forces, mais de découvrier des consommateurs, d'exciter leurs appetits et de leur créer des besoins factices.[52]

The absence of political activity among the working classes was reflected in the weak trade union movement. Many trade unions only lasted a few years and could not expand, nor accumulate funds. It was difficult to develop political self-consciousness in the working classes. The workers resigned themselves to a lifetime of hardships.[53] In addition, the working classes found it difficult to find a party that represented their interests effectively. Moreover, their endless

polemics and their virulent accusations alienated the public so that they failed to attract a large following.[54] The Guesdists alone provided leadership since they were the most unified of these parties, vigorous and even homogeneous.[55] Much of the attraction to the Guesdists was due to some of the positive aspects of Guesde's leadership. Although Guesde's rigidity did cause conflict, his energy and dedication served to attract members.

> La tentative de Guesde est successivement servit, puis l'essor du mouvement ouvrier. La timidité fait de crainte qui, jusqu'en 1878, paralysait le mouvement ouvrier, l'énergie de Guesde l'a transformé en une volonté action et d'organisation.[56]

Lafargue and Guesde attempted to appeal to the working class through their electoral program which concerned such issues as:

> ...civil liberty, arming of the people, religious separation, communal autonomy, eight hour day, weekly day of rest, abolition of child labour, minimum wage law, equal wages for equal work, free public education, and child maintenance, employer responsibility for industrial accidents, an end to employer interference with workers' treasuries, worker consultation on shop regulations, the return of all alienated public property, including banks, railroads, and mines, the abolition of indirect taxes, and imposition of a progressive tax on incomes of more than 3000 francs and all estates of more than 20,000 francs.[57]

Guesde's and Lafargue's goal was to establish a working class party based on Marxist theory and they enjoyed some success. The Guesdists

were comprised of peasants, shop owners, factory workers and artisans and were concentrated in the north, east centre, and the Mediterranean West of France.[58] Two areas of France heavily supported the Guesdists: the textile workers of the Nord and Pas-de-Calais. By 1898, the Guesdist party had 16,000 members and controlled many municipalities in both areas. The Guesdists were moderately successful in some rural areas due to their local political activity. But in the urban centres, they relied more on newspapers and pamphlets to convince the working classes of the rightness of their revolutionary theories. This strategy did not work. The masses did not read books, and were not persuaded by theory or newspapers. "The only way to make an impact on their ignorance was to show them that socialism worked in a practical, visible form."[59]

In order to appeal to the working class, the Guesdist party had become more reformist by the end of the century:

> ...the Marxist ideas were diluted. The party's agrarian program went after the peasantry with less taxation, to nationalization of only very large properties. There was less talk of class struggle and revolution.[60]

The party also worked towards losing some of its identity with the Germans:

> To get rid of their nicknames, 'Prussians' after Marx, they became patriots, indeed, chauvinists.[61]

The Guesdists had however a number of weaknesses. The party failed to assess France's economic and political conditions. Using Marxian analysis, they were certain that wages would fall. In fact, industrialization led to an improvement in wages. Their concern for theory rather than practical reform made it difficult to relate to the working class. Thus, Guesde was unable to gain support of the trade unions and disregarded some significant issues for Frenchmen, such as the Dreyfus affair and the rise of anticlericalism. Another weakness of the Guesdists can be found in the fact that they stood in stark contrast to the popular socialist thought of the Utopians of the 1840's and 1850's. The party lacked a positive vision for the future, thus failing to attract the many Frenchmen who had supported the Utopian socialists. Furthermore, the Guesdists were a party of strong central authority at a time when their competition consisted of loosely formed political groups.

Certainly another difficulty for the party was some of the negative aspects of Guesde's leadership. His inflexibility made it very difficult to unite all the socialist parties behind him. His authoritarianism also prevented other potentially strong leaders from remaining and advancing in the party. His dominating manner turned away some potential members, many of whom joined Brousse's Possibilists instead. Brousse had become an evolutionary socialist, and advocated the gradual development of the socialist society. Even though many of

the rank and file workers were not an optimistic as that, they did prefer his more flexible and more democratic kind of leadership to Guesde's.

During the 1880's and 1890's support grew for all socialist parties, even for the Guesdists, so that they became "less shrill and strident, less ideological and more pragmatic."[62] Lafargue believed that the socialist revolution would help the working class in achieving these improvements in their living conditions:

> The end of revolution is not the triumph of justice, morality, and liberty, but to work the least possible, to enjoy oneself intellectually and physically the most possible.[63]

The principles of socialism would secure such changes according to Lafargue:

> This end will only be attained by a continuous perfection of mechanization and by a wise division of social work among all members of society, only by a just proportioning of production for the needs of society.[64]

Lafargue expected that production would become more efficient after the revolution. The working day would be reduced to three or four hours per day. The remaining time in the day could be used by the worker to pursue physical and intellectual interests.

Lafargue's critique of societal problems that contributed to the plight of the working class did not always reflect the theoretical

basis of Marx and Engels' writings. Where Lafargue discussed the "work ethic" and working conditions, Marx and Engels described the working class and their hours of work in the context of surplus value:

> The prolongation of the working-day beyond the point at which the labourer would have produced just an equivalent for the value of his labour-power, and the appropriation of that surplus-labour by capital, this is production of absolute surplus-value.[65]

Lafargue did not refer to the theory of surplus value in his analysis of the quality of life and hours of work for the working class. He wished to avoid complex theory and instead appeal to the ordinary concerns of the workers. In this way, he also utilized his talent in explaining concrete issues.

Although there were negative consequences for the working classes, Lafargue also suggested that the current working conditions and economic organization would lead to further industrial crises, such as unemployment and overproduction. Speculation on the price of goods also would occur, leading to a stock and commodity market crash. This would be accompanied by a search for world-wide additional markets to unload overproduced goods.

Much of what Lafargue and the Guesdist Party advocated concerning shorter working hours and improvements in living conditions did not materialize until the turn of the century. In 1889, the International Labour Congress voted for an eight-hour day. In 1890 the Chamber of

Deputies committee on the conditions of labour determined that 164 of 171 trade unions favoured the eight hour day.[66] Living conditions were also beginning to improve for the working classes. By 1895, there were signs of an extended economic prosperity. Workers did benefit, although not in the same proportion as other classes:

> The share in the economic growth was certainly not felt equally by all sections of labour, but what could be discerned was the greater portion of some working class budgets given to a more varied diet and better clothing, signs both of better wages and an expectation of social amelioration.[67]

Wages had increased during the second half of the nineteenth century. Diet improved, although housing was still cramped. Production was mechanized to some degree. As machines became more complex, they required more light and space. More profit resulted in more funds being available for the machines and workers. Employers began to realize that excessively long working days adversely affected the quality of work.

After 1900 the French government began to introduce the same kinds of welfare laws pioneered in Germany by Bismarck. The hours of work were also regulated. In 1900, Millerand, Minister of Commerce, introduced two major laws: one for a ten hour day for women, and the second for compulsory arbitration of labour disputes. A secret ballot before a strike was also required. The second law was repealed when both employers and workers objected.

At the same time, the Confédération Générale du Travail advocated an eight hour day, as their goal was to make sure that "no labourer would work more than eight hours nor for a wage below the established minimum."[68] In fact, the C.G.T. supported "a six-day week and were...in favour of the English week, Saturday afternoon holiday, with Sunday closing."[69] The need for reform was generally recognized:

> In 1901, the Chamber of Deputies approved the compilation of a new legal code, the Labour Code...although it was still incomplete in 1914.[70]

Legislation for the sick and aged was passed in 1906. A contributory pension scheme was passed in 1910. A law requiring a weekly day of rest was passed in 1906.

CHAPTER THREE: FOOTNOTES

[1] William Cohn, p. 158.

[2] Jean Montreuil, Histoire du mouvement ouvrier en français (Paris: Aubier Edition, 1946), p. 232.

[3] Sidney Webb, The Eight Hour Day (London: Walter Scott, 1891), p. 58.

[4] Peter Stearns, p. 123.

[5] Ibid., p. 124.

[6] Henry Steele, The Working Classes in France (London: Twentieth Century Press, 1904), p. 17.

[7] Theodore Zeldin, p. 226.

[8] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, p. 261.

[9] Paul Lafargue, "The Rights of the Horse and the Rights of Man," The Rights to be Lazy and Other Studies (New York: Gordon Press, 1973), p. 157.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., p. 158.

[12] Ibid., p. 159.

[13] Ibid., p. 160.

[14] Ibid., p. 161.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., p. 163.

[17] F.F. Ridley, Revolutionary Syndicalism in France (Cambridge: University Press, 1979), p. 15.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Val Lorwin, The French Labour Movement (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 6.

[21] Judith Frances Stone, Social Reform in France: The Development of its Ideology and Implementation, 1890 - 1914 (New York: State University, 1979), p. 94.

[22] Paul Louis, Histoire de la classe ouvrière en France (Paris: Librairie Marcel Rivière, 1927), p.250.

[23] F.F. Ridley, p. 22.

[24] Ibid., p. 22.

[25] Theodore Zeldin, p. 209.

[26] F.F. Ridley, p. 23.

[27] Jean Fréville, Paul Lafargue critique littéraire (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1936), p. xv.

[28] Paul Lafague, "Le Droit à la Paresse," p. 105.

[29] Ibid., p. 106.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., p. 107.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., p. 110.

[35] Ibid., p. 114.

[36] Robert Tucker (ed.), The Marx-Engels Reader (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), p. 346.

[37] Paul Lafargue, "Le Droit à la Paresse," p. 122.

[38] Ibid., p. 120.

[39] Ibid., p. 130.

[40] Claude Willard, Socialisme et communisme français (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1967), p. 49.

[41] Georges Lefranc, Les Gauches en France (Paris: Payot, 1973), p. 30.

[42] F.F. Ridley, p. 12.

[43] Ibid., p. 16.

[44] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, p. 250.

[45] Cohn, p. 159.

[46] Paul Lafargue, "Le Droit à la Paresse," p. 120.

[47] Ibid., p. 133.

[48] Ibid., p. 135.

[49] Ibid., p. 140.

[50] Ibid., p. 124.

[51] Ibid., p. 126.

[52] Ibid., p. 129.

[53] Peter Stearns, Revolutionary Syndicalism (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1971), p. 43.

[54] F.F. Ridley, p. 22.

[55] Marcel Prélot, L'Evolution politique du socialisme français, 1789-1934 (Paris: Edition SPES, 1939), p. 123.

[56] Edouard Dolleans, Histoire du mouvement ouvrier (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1967), p. 16.

[57] Bernard Moss, Origins of the French Labour Movement (Berkeley: University of California, 1976), p. 107.

[58] Bernard Moss, "Origins of French Socialism: Ideology from Below," p. 87.

[59] Theodore Zeldin, p. 391.

[60] Ibid., p. 386.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Thomas Moodie, "The Reorientation of French Socialism: 1888-1890," International Review of Social History, No. 20 (1975), p. 347.

[63] William Cohn, p. 160.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, p. 305.

[66] Sidney Webb, p. 61.

[67] Peter Stearns, Workers in Protest (Itasca: F.E. Peacock, 1971), p. 53.

[68] Marjorie Clark, A History of the French Labour Movement, (New York: Johnson Reprint Co., 1930), p. 22.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Judith Frances Stone, p. 94.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

Lafargue's contribution to Marxism and socialism in France had been predominantly as a theoretician of the ideas of Marx and Engels. He attempted to spread Marxist thinking to the working classes in France and to develop and advocate his own ideas which were based on a Marxist ideology. As a theoretician, Lafargue may be said to have made a number of mistakes in interpretation and strategy. Part of the difficulty was the limited number of translations of Marx's and Engels' available work. Lafargue could not speak or read German and had to rely on his wife's assistance. Another difficulty was Lafargue's own interpretation of the theoretical foundations of Marxism; he made some modifications to Marxist theory in a very deliberate way when he felt that the interests of the French working class were better served by it. Lafargue was favorable to the welfare state not as a substitute for revolution, rather to effect immediate change.

Another problem Lafargue encountered, was the development of an effective strategy to attract the workers to the party and to Marxist ideas. Lafargue was concerned with how to reach the working class:

> Lafargue's primary concern at the outset was to get the economic truths to the working class; rally them to a conscious recognition of their misery, and convince them that it was in their own interest to join an independent militant working class party. The problem was how to attract the masses.[1]

As the Guesdist continued to develop policy and strategy through the latter part of the nineteenth century, Lafargue became more reformist

in his ideas in an attempt to woo the working class:

> Lafargue wanted to show Guesde the importance of socialist participation in municipal government...this was the way to carry out the daily struggle, not the revolution. Lafargue did not believe that a revolutionary movement would ever arrive for all of France until the municipalities were controlled by the workers' parties.[2]

Lafargue wanted to strengthen the role of the working class and help them act for themselves through a political party such as the Guesdists. In this way, Lafargue wanted the party to focus on concrete legislative proposals within the context of Marx's theories. Addressing the workers' immediate needs would assist the people to develop as a strong force which would then be able to participate in the oncoming revolution:

> By regulating the needs and working conditions of the proletariat, the workers will become better paid, better nourished and healthier--better equipped physically and psychologically. They will see and understand the need to join the party in order to organize their forces and prepare for the conquest of other state power.[3]

Consequently, Lafargue believed that:

> ...his elaborate and complex ideas about state intervention on both the municipal and national level would ameliorate men's lives while at the same time help the economic system develop to the point that a social revolution would be possible.[4]

Much of Marxist theory, such as the dictatorship of the working class, was impossible for the working class to understand initially:

> Since the working class would not have rallied to the cause of a worker's party committee merely to final revolutionary activity, an intermediate program of political involvement leading to some realizable reforms had to be devised, and that was the purpose of his articles on municipalities in 1880.[5]

Part of the difficulty was the nature of Marx's and Engels' theories. Not only were the theories foreign and frequently unavailable in French translations, but also they were rather abstract. The working class by and large were interested in their own working conditions. Discussions about an on-coming revolution in rather theoretical language did not motivate them to embrace Marxism very easily. In addition, Marx's and Engel's theories were based on experiences outside of France. Lafargue attempted to introduce examples from France in his writings, and he was concerned about making Marxist theory relevant to the French working classes.

Engels shared Lafargue's concern of making Marxist thought relevant to a French environment:

> The more of the French are coming to the front, the more I shall be glad. The continental movement to be victorious, must be neither all French nor all German, but franco-allemande. If the Germans taught the French how to use the suffrage and how to organize strongly, the French will have to penetrate the Germans with that revolutionary

> spirit which the history of a century has made traditional with them. The time has passed forever when one nation can claim to lead all the rest.[6]

Another difficulty in developing a strategy to relate to the working class was Lafargue's faith in propaganda. Although he did spend considerable time making speeches and attending political functions, he also placed great importance on written essays and articles and the usefulness of propaganda. These ideas would attract the masses.

In addition to interpreting Marx's and Engels' works somewhat inaccurately and to trying to appeal to the workers' interest, Lafargue also tended to oversimplify his analyses of Marxist theories. Often Lafargue omitted theoretical discussions of his writings for fear of alienating the working class:

> You will have received Nouvelle Revue which I sent you yesterday. In order to put myself on a level with the readers of the review, I omitted much of the theoretical part...[7]

Claude Willard has suggested how this kind of simplification was at times more useful than the abstract theory:

> La vulgarization, comme toute pédagogie élémentaire exige une simplification, une schématisation, d'autant plus nécessaires que le marxisme constitue une théorie neuve et infiniment complèxe.[8]

However, in his attempt to relate Marxist theory to the working class

Lafargue often provide unsophisticated treatments of Marx's ideas which may have misled the French into thinking that Marxist theory could not be used to analyze broad questions concerning society.

In spite of these errors in strategy and interpretation, Lafargue was one of the key theoreticians of Marxism in late nineteenth century France:

> Parmi tous les socialistes contemporaines, Lafargue apparaît comme le seul théoricien qui, avec continuité, tenta d'appliquer de façon créatrice, la méthode de réflexion et d'analyse Marxiste à la solution de problèmes idéologiques les plus divers, politiques, philosophiques, religieux, ethique, esthetiques, sans nul doute, il commit maintes erreurs, péchant par dogmatise, boutade ou par le désir de briller mais il chercha et il osa. Et son audace fut féconde.[9]

Lafargue wrote extensively about theoretical questions such as the nature of the economic system, the class struggle, Darwinism, religious issues such as Christianity, God, and the clergy, artistic criticism, and practical concerns such as workers' rights, municipal government and propaganda. One of his most significant contributions was his attempt both to educate the working class and to relate to their concerns. This contribution can be seen most directly in his writings on the working conditions of the working class and the role of women. Lafargue made strategic mistakes in trying to relate directly to the workers, but these are outweighed by his contribution in drawing attention to each issue, explaining each issue in a practical and

understandable manner, and persisting in discussing each issue in his writings.

With regard to the question of living conditions of the working class, Lafargue's intent was to address the concerns of the working class and to offer a Marxist framework as a foundation for his ideas. Although Lafargue did focus on such practical concrete issues as the length of the working day and the quality of the working man's life, he also discussed Marxist theory. But in his analysis of the living and working conditions of the working class, he focussed on two of the major concerns of the workers: low wages and long working hours. Often the aspirations of the working class were to acquire a bourgeois standard of living through reduced hours of work and increased wages. In order to respond directly to the workers' concerns, Lafargue discussed these two issues of hours and wages extensively in his articles. This focus in hours and wages was of prime importance to all socialist parties at the time.

In order to examine French society as a whole, Lafargue explained how the economic system would lead to unemployment and overproduction. The workers' rights had begun to improve with the French Revolution, but the revolution did not go far enough in helping the workers to a better life.

Lafargue's articles often seemed very journalistic in that he wrote simply and with humour. In this manner, he broadened their

appeal to both the working classes and fellow socialists. Although he did make some references to theoretical questions, he tended to focus more on the immediate concerns of the working classes.

Not only was Lafargue concerned about relating to the concerns of the working class, he also believed that his role was to educate the working class about the value of socialist and Marxist theory. In his discussions about the working conditions of the working classes, he analyzed more than the hours of work and wages. He emphasized the need for the proletariat to gain self-consciousness and to recognize the political and economic strength they possessed in collective action.

Lafargue also strove to encourage the workers to examine the quality of life in their lives. Many of Lafargue's writings focused on developing a way of life where the workers could enjoy intellectual and physical pursuits and where they could concentrate on celebrating life. In order to encourage the workers to consider the quality of their working lives, Lafargue wrote extensively about the futility of embracing bourgeois values by pointing out the hypocrisy of the bourgeois.

Although Lafargue was persistent in describing the views of Marxism and in relating to the concerns of the working class, he did make some strategic errors. The workers' concerns with practical issues such as wages and hours, led the Guesdists to become more reformist in their policies and strategies. Through his writings,

Lafargue had endeavored to address the workers' concerns. The high illiteracy rate of the workers and the difficulty of advancing ideas through a written format, at times resulted in his writings being more extensively read by fellow theorists than by workers. Perhaps to overcome this difficulty, Lafargue should have addressed more specifically the political and economic problems of France at the time. Although he did concentrate on the need to increase wages and reduce hours, which would improve the quality of life, he did not provide concrete strategies to help the working class reach this goal.

With reference to questions concerning the role of women, Lafargue's prime contribution was to promote the discussion and analysis of women's roles in society. He was not only trying to appeal to the women themselves, he was trying to educate fellow socialists and the working class. Lafargue was supportive of women's equality and women receiving recognition for their special talents. Many socialists at the time felt that the most appropriate and rewarding role for a woman was that of a mother. Although Lafargue did believe that motherhood was a special and meaningful role for women, he also believed that a woman's role should not be restricted to the home. As a result, Lafargue sharply criticized Proudhon who was a staunch advocate of a restricted role for women.

Although Lafargue wrote extensively about the role of women in society, there were some inconsistencies in his analysis. First, as a

member of the Guesdist party, Lafargue was a supporter of an expanded women's role; however, in actuality, women were allowed to become members but possessed no voting privileges. In terms of political strategy, the Guesdists continued to focus on the working class as a whole. Instead, assurances were made that with the socialist revolution, changes for women would occur.

Lafargue expanded on the tradition of French political though by relating his ideas to those of Proudhon. Proudhon had always been a strong advocate of working class rights; he believed that only the workers themselves could fight for their own emancipation. Lafargue too encouraged the working class to view themselves as a powerful force, one with common concerns and goals.

In conclusion, Lafargue will be remembered as one of the theoreticians of Marxism in France in the nineteenth century. He will also be remembered for the mistakes in interpretation and strategy which he made. Nonetheless, by relating to the workers' concerns and developing his own ideas based on a Marxist ideology he laid the foundation for the consequent growth of Marxism in France.

CHAPTER FOUR: FOOTNOTES

[1] William Cohn, p. 140.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 148.

[4] Ibid., p. 153.

[5] Ibid., p. 187.

[6] Frederick Engels and Paul and Laura Lafargue, Vol. 3, p. 203.

[7] Frederick Engels and Paul and Laura Lafargue, Vol. 1, p. 344.

[8] Claude Willard, Socialisme et communisme, p. 53.

[9] La Naissance du Parti Ouvrier Français, correspondance inédite (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1981), p. 27.

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APPENDIX I

"....Les travailleurs socialistes français, en donnant pour but à leur efforts l'expropriation politique et économique de la classe capitaliste et le retour à la collectivité de tous les moyens de production, ont décidé, comme moyens d'organisation et de lutte, d'entrer dans les élections avec les revendications immédiates suivantes:

A. Partie politique

1. Abolition de toutes les lois sur la presse, les réunions et les associations et surtout de la loi contre l'Association Internationale des Travailleurs. - Suppression du livret, cette mise en carte de la classe ouvrière, et de tous les articles du Code établissant l'infériorité de l'ouvrier vis-à-vis du patron et l'infériorité de la femme vis-à-vis de l'homme;
2. Suppression du budget des cultes et retour à la nation "des biens dits de main-morte, meubles et immeubles, appartenant aux corporations religieuses" (décret de la Commune du 2 Avril 1871), y compris toutes les annexes industrielles et commerciales de ces corporations;
3. Suppression de la dette publique;
4. Abolition des armées permanentes et armement général du people;

5. La Commune maîtresse de son administration et de sa police.

B. Partie économique

1. Repos d'un jour par semaine ou interdiction légale pour les employeurs de faire travailler plus de six jours sur sept. - Réduction légale de la journée de travail à huit heures pour les adultes. - Interdiction du travail des enfants dans les ateliers privés au-dessous de quatorze ans; et de quatorze à dix-huit ans, reduction de la journée de travail à six heures;
2. Surveillance protectrice des apprentis par les corporations ouvrières;
3. Minimum légal des salaires, déterminé, chaque année, d'après le prix local des denrées, par une commission de statistique ouvrière;
4. Interdiction légale aux patrons d'employer les ouvriers étrangers à un salaire inférieur à celui des ouvriers français;
5. Egalité de salaire à travail égal pour les travailleurs des deux sexes;
6. Instruction scientifique et professionnelle de tous les enfants mis, pour leur entretien, à la charge de la Société représentée par l'Etat et par la Commune;

7. Mise à la charge de la Société des vieillards et des invalides du travail;
8. Suppression de toute immixtion des employeurs dans l'administration des caisses ouvrières de secours mutuels, de prévoyance, etc. restituées à la gestion exclusive des ouvriers;
9. Responsabilité des patrons en matière d'accidents, garantie par un cautionnement versé par l'employeur dans les caisses ouvrières, et proportionné au nombre des ouvriers employés et aux dangers que présente l'industrie.
10. Intervention des ouvriers dans les règlements spéciaux des divers ateliers; suppression du droit usurpé par les patrons de frapper d'une pénalité quelconque leurs ouvriers sous formes d'amendes ou de retenues sur les salaires (décret de la Commune du 27 Avril 1871);
11. Annulation de tous les contrats ayant aliéné la propriété publique (banque, chemins de fer, mines, etc.) et l'exploitation de tous les ateliers de l'Etat confiée aux ouvriers qui y travaillent;
12. Abolition de tous les impôts progressifs sur les revenus dépassant 3,000 fr. Suppression de l'héritage en ligne collatérale et de tout héritage en ligne directe dépassant 20,000 francs.